



# UNIVERSITY YES-WOMEN?

A NOVEL turn was given to proceedings at a recent meeting of the Wellington branch of the Federation of University Women when the second speaker on the subject for the evening maintained that the New Zealand university colleges were turning out women graduates with good text-book knowledge but with no developed sense of civic responsibility.

The subject for the evening's discussion was a fairly general one: "Women And the University." However, three women had been selected to talk more specifically on the subject "What Has the University Done for Me?" They were an undergraduate, a recent graduate, and a graduate of riper years.

The undergraduate, still in the first flush of youthful enthusiasm, maintained that she had learnt to work hard and to know satisfaction in working hard. She had achieved a sense of proportion through learning how much there was to know, and a sense of wonder through knowledge. And from her social contacts she had gained tolerance and a broader understanding.

## Outmoded Teaching Methods

The recent graduate admitted that for sheer enjoyment—hard work and social contacts—there was nothing to equal University life. But instead of considering what the University had done for her, she proposed to consider what the University should do for all its graduates and consider whether it had done it. Its chief functions should be to train women as responsible citizens, and to give them some specialised knowledge—educational, commercial, industrial—which would enable them to take their place in the world as responsible citizens. This, she said, it did not do. The majority of women graduated unaware of their responsibilities. They had the specialised knowledge, but they had not learnt to apply it.

This, she maintained, was one of the faults of the University's outmoded teaching methods. The professor was usually too busy to be bothered with questions, with the result that women

students were encouraged to be yes-women. They learnt that what the text-book says, goes, and with high marks, too. Such training was not calculated to develop the critical faculty. Women should be able to assert themselves in their own field, and to do this they should have decisions and real problems forced upon them from the time they entered the university.

## Specialised Knowledge

In the opinion of the older graduate good text-book knowledge, decried by the previous speaker, was the most important contribution a graduate brought from the University to her ordinary civic life. Furthermore, the fact that university women were not especially prominent on local bodies or in Parliamentary circles didn't necessarily prove them lacking in civic responsibility. Women came from the University in most cases equipped by reason of their specialised knowledge to fill some particular niche in the community.

But the fact that a graduate was devoted to her own particular type of work should not mean a narrowing of her interests. The community had need of "cultivated" people, not merely people who had a wide range of interests themselves, but who were capable of spreading new knowledge and new interests, even if it were only within the confines of their own homes and schoolrooms. The graduate who made a good job of bringing up her family or of teaching in a backblocks school showed as much sense of duty to the community as the woman who served the community more directly on committees and local bodies.

In looking back now, she said, she felt that the broadening of interests she had acquired during her university days had, in Father William's words, lasted the rest of her life. If the graduate kept alive the ideals with which she left the university, she would retain through her life the faculty of being interested in things and of making other people interested in them, and she would still be equipped with a capacity for hard work. These gifts, she felt strongly, were not of negligible value to the community, and if every graduate came out of the university similarly equipped, it could not be said that the University had failed to equip its women for the responsibilities of citizenship.

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