



*Y President Baird Brandow,
Student Body President Dick Kirk,
and Dr. Oppenheimer—
after his formal talk to undergraduates.*

PATHS TO MANHOOD

Some notes on Caltech's Leaders of America

DR. OPPENHEIMER was sitting in a large overstuffed chair in the Tolman study when a student asked him if he thought a classical education was of more value than an engineering or scientific one. He relighted his pipe with a match from his seemingly endless supply before he answered, "There are many types of men, and many paths to manhood."

After Dr. Oppenheimer's visit had ended, I thought back over this answer—and the men we had met through the YMCA's Leaders of America program: Dr. Oppenheimer, Ralph Bunche, William O. Douglas, and Paul Hoffman. Each is eminently successful in his work, each was friendly and eager to cooperate during his visit to Caltech, yet each was completely different from the others. Indeed, the value and appeal of the Leaders program seems to be in discovering each man's personality. A man's ideas can be found in his works, but the program enables us to learn about the man in the best way possible—by meeting him.

When we met Paul Hoffman, the first guest of the program, he seemed shorter than he looks in pictures—and much friendlier than he appears in his Bachrach portrait. For 12 hours a day, for four days, he met with students in small groups, spoke before large groups,

talked, answered questions, asked questions, joked, and laughed. In spite of this strenuous pace, his warmth increased as his visit progressed.

We met Justice Douglas and his wife as they hurried through dinner at the Athenaeum before rushing to Dabney Hall for the Justice's first public appearance. His weather-beaten baby face came as something of a surprise, but his relaxed friendly manner seemed altogether natural. He appeared to enjoy talking with students about his broad background and his varied experiences. He was as interested in learning from students as he was in educating them.

Dr. Bunche had the understanding and relaxed poise that comes from many years of working with people. Perhaps more than any of our other guests, he welcomed disagreement. He thrived on ironing out differences of opinion, and as the discussion became more heated he seemed calmer. He had a ready sense of humor that he often used to bring his audience closer. In moments of repose, away from groups of people, he became more serious and, at times, seemed to be deeply tired.

My roommate and I got up at 4:45 in the morning to meet Dr. Oppenheimer at International Airport, and his

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flight arrived about 6:15, in a drizzly, foglike rain. He stepped off the plane wearing his proverbial tweed suit, battered pork-pie hat, and blue shirt.

He got into the back seat and as we pulled away from the airport, he asked—in typical back-seat style—why we were headed out to sea. At that hour of the morning, we really *didn't* know which way was home, but my roommate pulled out the map and said we were on course—sort of. So, with the help of the map, Dr. Oppenheimer in the back seat, and the Los Angeles freeways, we eventually arrived at the Tolman house in Pasadena, where he would stay during his visit.

When we took his bags into the house he offered to cook breakfast, but he had been on the plane all night, and we were sure he was tired in spite of his good nature, so we thanked him and said no.

He had lunch in Fleming House that day; and it was here that we first saw him react to questioning. When one of the 40 or more students around him asked a question, he smiled a little and fumbled with his pipe before he answered. Sometimes he would answer before a student could finish asking a question, but for the most part he would hesitate, unsure in his own mind that he could give a satisfactory answer, and then reply slowly and deliberately. Often he would stop, draw a nervous finger across his lips, relight his pipe, and stare at the floor—thinking back over what he had said, still looking for the right words, the right sentences to express his ideas.

He was surrounded by students throughout the week, and remained friendly, cooperative, and humble. On Saturday night, an open house at Tolmans' was supposed to provide an opportunity for people to come and talk in small groups, like at any party. But almost immediately



Open house



Press conference

Dr. Oppenheimer was submerged in people, and, as he moved, the crowd moved.

Dr. Oppenheimer abhors formal speeches, but he consented to give one talk to graduates so that he could sum up his impressions of his visit. As he gave the address, he seemed uncomfortable and uncertain that he was expressing himself adequately. Even after the audience gave him a standing ovation he was not sure that he had said what he hoped to say.

During his stay, Dr. Oppenheimer seemed more at ease in small groups, where he could communicate on a personal basis, than in large groups, where he was the center of attention. He was uncomfortable when confronted with difficult questions, because he did not know the answers—yet he seems to live, in part, for these as yet unanswered questions.

By now, I find that I recall more how Dr. Oppenheimer acted than what he said while he was here. I remember him coming from the plane, concerned that we had come so far so early—walking with him to the Tolman house after his speech, and his warmth and hospitality as he invited us in—and finally, as he entered the Biltmore, his apologetically telling a newsboy that he didn't need a paper. Even more than our other guests, he has the humility that comes with experience and the understanding that comes from a personal sensitivity.

—Richard M. Kirk '58