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Nevertheless -- and this is my rational justification for what may be, at heart, simply a love of home -- I'm convinced that vestiges of the old, vital Kansas do yet remain beneath that almost impenetrable crust of mediocrity we've allowed to form over us. They may be even more than vestiges; perhaps there's as much native Kansas genius as there ever was, and all that's been lacking is the means of expressing and organizing it -- the means being largely in the hands of unmiudful men.

I thought so a few years ago, anyway, when an enthusiastic UNESCO movement, initiated by Milton Eisenhower who was then chairman of the United States National Commission for UNESCO, swept over the state, uncovering a surprising amount of liberal, internationalist sentiment in this alleged center of mindless "isolationism," as well as an almost pathetic eagerness to live again the life of the mind. That such sentiment still exists, largely unexpressed, is evidenced by the fact that Kansas University's United Nations Conference is one of the most successful of that institution's extension activities.

There are other signs, if slender ones, of the latent possibility for a renaissance. Kansans, in consequence of the devastating flood of '51, are certainly taking a more intelligent active interest in river-development problems than they formerly did, framing legislation which may make valuable contributions to a badly needed national water policy.

We're also doing some creative thinking about long-term farm policy, expressing it through our farm organizations. We may deplore the fact that Kansas, whose first settlers were so committed to education, now ranks thirty-third among the states in average teacher salaries, but we can proclaim with pride that since '48 we've advanced from forty-sixth to fourth among all states in our per capita expenditures for mental hospitals.

Nor is Kansas literature, which once had high standing in the nation, now wholly moribund. In Robert Taft of Lawrence we have one of the most important and original historians of the American West. In Topeka, H. G. Clugston, author of "Rascals in Democracy," continues the old Populist hell raising tradition while his fellow townsman, Karl Menninger, continues to make valuable contributions to popular understanding of psychiatry. Of the Menningers, Doctors Karl and Will, and of the clinic they founded and head in Topeka, we Kansans are immensely proud.

Precisely these signs of a continuing vitality are what make our voices so impatient as we ask, in 1954, "What's the matter with Kansas?" There seems no iron necessity that we continue as a timidly conformist community; it is not required, by whatever gods rule our destiny, that the second-rate be forever maintained in the seats of the mighty. Surely it is time for us to rise again, restore our vital connection with a great creative tradition, and thus again become "a kind of prophecy" for all America.