Professor in Action

"May God have mercy on us all," said R. Victor Jones on his first day as the new Dean of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences and Assistant Dean of the Faculty, concerned with graduate education. Divine assistance may be necessary, he believes, to support graduate education. Today's tight job market has converted the increased number of Ph.D.'s into a scholar surplus, and the Graduate School can depend no longer on the Federal government, or even on private foundations, to support graduate education enthusiastically. "For the past ten years," says Dean Jones, "we have had a Medici in Washington. But how can you maintain a Renaissance spirit in a conservative environment?" "In the past," he continues, "graduate students in Arts and Sciences didn't have to question what they were doing because there was always financial support for them. Now they are questioning their goals and commitments. They need the clear objectives of students in the professional schools." Dean Jones believes that a cutback in the number of bright young Ph.D. candidates at Harvard would be disastrous, but adds that "most people won't want to spend seven or eight years to go nowhere." A native Californian, Dean Jones took his A.B. and Ph.D. degrees from Berkeley, came to Harvard in 1958, and is now Gordon McKay Professor of Applied Physics. His special scientific interest at the moment is in the optical properties of a transparent ceramic material he is developing. He doesn't have much time for his current off-hours project, remodeling his Arlington home, shared with his wife and three young sons. Busy with administrative, teaching, and research commitments, he says, "I end up hammering nails at 3 a.m."