

Maybe Cheating Is Justified

"Why do students cheat on exams?"

It's a question that has been bandied back and forth between instructors and students often in the past two days, as a result of the proposed Honor System questionnaires that are now being distributed.

The question is logical enough but in very few cases is there any logic in the answers. Cheating is classified as a tolerated form of dishonesty and since dishonesty is unjustified then cheating is likewise unjustified.

Granting the assumption does little to remove the cause. And the cause goes deeper than the alternatives offered in the questionnaire. The number of students who cheat because of habit, pressure, mental lassitude, or competition, whether class or otherwise, are negligible.

Naturally the initial cause of cheating is the necessity of taking exams. Since there seems little possibility of eliminating the initial cause in its entirety it is logical to examine the cause part by part.

Consider the essay type examination. An instructor is asked to thoroughly cover six weeks' to three months' work in an exam designed to be written in two hours. So he compiles ten questions to cover the most important parts of the course. Now maybe a student can't answer two or three of these ten but could answer two or three others that are unasked but equally important. So he looks over his neighbor's shoulder.

Of course the instructor argues that the student should be prepared to answer any question and not isolated ones. True enough but the argument goes around the point. Maybe some other student who happens to know the desired answers would be unable to answer any other unasked question carrying the same weight. But he gets the grade and the first student gets the flunk unless he cheats. So he cheats and is justified by logic if not by ideals.

Objective tests have a different fault. They cover the ground but often miss on wording. Objective tests call for definite answers with no chance for personal explanation. And up comes the old bugbear of interpretation. Many instructors admit it is nearly impossible to construct a two or three line question that has absolute clarity and leaves no chance for misinterpretation.

Yet many instructors refuse to explain a meaning-clouded question if they be asked during an examination through fear of giving away the answer. And again the student refuses to jeopardize his standing in a course in which he knows the subject matter but is suspicious of the exam. And again he justifies his cheating with the old adage, "you must fight fire with fire".

So it seems if you are to eliminate cheating by otherwise honest students you must first eliminate any logical cause for cheating. If that is done big scale cheating will go by the board.

And once honest students are given no justifiable excuse for cheating it will be a much easier matter to handle the habitually dishonest ones who cheat in any phase of life.

—D. H. T.

Speedy Justice?

A building near Mason hall was deliberately set on fire Friday night.

That is unfortunate, and certainly every one will agree that the person or persons responsible should be brought to justice.

But action of college authorities does not bring forth such unanimity of opinion.

The fire had scarcely cooled before authorities stated that the loss would be pro-rated among all the residents of Mason hall unless the person or persons responsible for the fire were discovered. Authorities officially did not admit that Mason hall students were responsible; instead they merely reported that, if the actual arsonist was not discovered, dormitory residents would pay the price.

This statement, in itself, is an injustice to dormitory men, since it implies that proof that the arsonist is a dormitory resident is lacking. It corresponds, roughly, to the third degree as used by police in low rate melodramas and is, in a manner of thinking, an attempt to force a person to testify against himself.

What the statement actually means, when analyzed, is this: "We know that Mason hall students have threatened the building. They have objected to it, have attempted to move it, have attempted to burn it. Therefore, it is logical to assume that they had a hand in setting it on fire this time."

Thus far, no one could criticize any official. Such an approach would be used by any investigator. But the statement goes farther. Continuing the analysis might lead to something like this:

"Since it is logical to suspect that these men as a body had a hand in burning the building, they should be made to bear the loss unless the action can be pinned on some one else or at least some specific person."

Here the danger begins, for it is the American principle that every one is innocent until proven guilty. An accused person does not have to prove he is innocent; instead, the state has to prove him guilty in his presence. College officials have not done this.

However, one can analyze even further. To continue:

"In this way, the college is protected from loss, and at the same time, a better search will be made for the arsonist, since to tell Mason hall residents that they will be responsible for the damage unless the arsonist is discovered will make them doubly anxious to find him. Further, if the arsonist does live in the dormitory, pressure will be brought against him to make him confess and thus free others from the penalty."

And this, actually, is an attempt to force a confession. Further, it makes any Masonites who furnish clues to the identity of the arsonist stool pigeons since they can be accused of an attempt to avoid their part of the payment.

In pursuing their present course, college officials are running away from the problem. They are admitting that dormitory residents as a body set the fire, and in admitting that, they admit that Mason hall can not be governed which is admitting that Michigan State can not teach students to live in a democracy. In covering up this admission, officials are using undemocratic means, another indication that democracy does not work at Michigan State.

Rather than throw the burden on all Mason residents, a much wiser course for the college authorities would be to investigate the matter thoroughly, find and punish accordingly, those guilty. Certainly, it would be much more upright, courageous, democratic, and in most persons' eyes, more honorable.—S. M. A.

LOOTED

By JERRY DEWAR

Colleges throughout the United States, especially those in the South and Middle West, have discovered that students are musically inclined and, having an interest in students, they have established music libraries where the music lovers may go and check out phonograph records. Take for instance over at Cornell. They have a library where one may make a selection from several thousand records. Strange as it may seem, the men frequent the library the most and select and seem to prefer the symphonies of Wagner, Tchaikovsky, Beethoven, and Bach.

We wonder why such a library has not sprung up here at MSC. Can it not be that the students are not musically inclined? Perhaps so. But did the college officials ever think that such a step might be a cause instead of an effect. It might be that if such a library came into existence here, there would be more students attend a glee club in a glee club than a queen at their ball this year.

WATCH YOUR STEP

As questionnaires floated around the campus today in an effort of the Student Council to discover the opinion of the student body concerning a system of honor exams, we are reminded of a recent affair at the University of North Carolina. Twenty-five students in a glee club there made the mistake of cheating during exams. After a full week of deliberation the student council suspended 13 of the participants and gave the others sentences ranging from loss of credits in all courses

BUSTLES TOO

If a stranger were to have dropped into Omaha, Nebraska, last weekend he would have thought that he had been transported as

The Readers Speak

Botany Students Express Regret At Way Courses Are Handled Here And at Many Other Large Colleges

As a student of botany, I have been observing conditions in the botany department for some time. One thing which I dislike about the botany department is the course in general botany (Bot. 101, 102, 103).

For several years I have felt that this course is not only poorly taught, but that it is poorly designed for the average student.

In my own case I realize the value of a highly technical foundation in botany, but for the average student it is extremely valuable. No doubt it is also valuable of time given the technical nature of it, promptly forcing one to learn it in a short time.

For several years I have been thinking about expressing my opinions to the State News. But I have found a statement by Albert F. Hill of Harvard university, which expresses what I think is right in a better manner than I could say.

Courtesy from one who is a leader in his field, quoted from the speech of Hill at "Education Before Birth,"

"Even though the value of including a considerable amount of economic material in a beginning course in botany may be recognized, the limitations of time or varied curriculum requirements usually render such a procedure impractical."

Any attempt to educate the layman as to the importance of plants cannot fail to be productive of many beneficial results, and may help in establishing botany in a part with chemistry, physics, geology, and zoology in the eyes of the world.

That is a botanist's opinion of the situation and it agrees very well with the opinions of the average student taking general botany.

I showed Hill's book to several biologists and all agreed to have three terms of botany, and when I met with him again he agreed to my suggestion that the first course in botany be divided into three separate courses, one for each term.

For the most part such courses have been conducted on the suggestion that they will be of great benefit to the individual, but the students themselves have not been able to see the benefit.

A student has a right to expect proportionate credit for his work, and that is what everyone, to be well educated, ought to know.

Botany is an interesting subject and needs only to be properly presented to be made very interesting to the average student.

"In such cases an educational course should be so constituted to be interesting and profitable to the extent of adding to the student's general fund of knowledge, even if he does not continue the field."

In other words, the course should have some of a cutting as a purely technical value. As Gager states in the preface to his "General Botany":

"A student has a right to expect proportionate credit for his work, and that is what everyone, to be well educated, ought to know."

There will be a second article soon about this topic.

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Walt Rummel

from the

EXCHANGE

AIN'T HE PURTY

With all this talk going around about who will be queen of winter, queen of football, queen of ice, and so forth we were somewhat surprised the other day when our eyes fell upon headline which stated that the Senior Ball KING had been elected. Loyola university will have a king instead of a queen at their ball this year.

Around

the DISKS

BUCKSHOT

31.6%

OF ALL COLLEGE STUDENTS OBTAIN DEGREES!

(ACP)

CAMPUS CARTOONS



CROSSFIRE

—By OSRIC

SPRING IS HERE (As the Spartan would do it)

It was springtime. The grass was green as grass-like the grass in springtime.

Hobo Joe lurched hesitatingly across the sill of Mike's Eatery Place bumbling vagabond as he stared into the eyes of Sally the waitress.

Sally was the sweetheart of almost everybody on the campus. Except the student body and the faculty.

Joe looked lonesome somehow in this bustling college town. Far East Lansing was a bustling college town. Much better than Ann Arbor.

Joe looked at Sally with tired sad eyes and clinged to her neck on the counter. He sighed sadly and pointed meaningfully at an outdated campaign poster of Roosevelt.

At last he spoke to Sally. "Grazing out on the concrete. Giving a dime for a cup of coffee?" It was a question.

Sally tossed her burnished hair haughtily. "Let's see the coffee first." Hobo Joe rose slowly to his feet and lurched out.

As he passed us near the door I noticed he was wearing Michigan Varsity sweater. Roosevelt's fault. Hobo Joe had gone to M. S. C. We called another beer.

It was springtime.

SPRING IS HERE (As the Wolverine has it)

Spring has long been one of the better known institutions of Michigan State college. With seven straight victories over H. college in baseball,

Michigan State was first brought into the limelight by Cliff Young, who ran the team back in '37 to Jack Hennigan, spring of the best liked features of the varied curriculum M. S. C. its students.

This year spring got off to a good start, but State college has to expect great things of it in the 1939-40 season.

SPRING IS HERE—(State News editorial)

According to reports received from the U. S. weather bureau it is reliably asserted on good authority that spring may be on its way if campus rumors are accepted unscientifically.

With spring just around the corner, so to speak, it is fitting and fitting that we pay our respects to other campus institutions which have so wholeheartedly our cause, we believe.

So come on spring! Michigan State college is ready and eager to greet you on the campus at large salutation. And we believe

Three thousand extra customers will bring their dollars here this week for the Future Farmers of America convention, May 4 and 5.

The Thursday morning State News will help them spend their time most profitably.

The Thursday morning State News will help them spend their dollars to best advantage.

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