

PENN STATE COLLEGIAN

Published semi-weekly during the College year, except on holidays, by students of The Pennsylvania State College, in the interest of the College, the students, faculty, alumni, and friends.

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MONDAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 19, 1934

THINKERS

Students as thinkers have found a defender. In this issue Dean Warnock makes a reply to recent charges of student anarchy. His letter reveals the opinion of one who has had long and intimate contact with a large number of students.

The Dean's defense of student thinking at Penn State lies in the point that undergraduate activities are in good condition, and that this implies "sound, progressive thinking by a lot of students." This last statement, however, might be difficult to prove. It is questionable just how many students have thought out some of the recent reforms in student government. The changes made in Student Tribunal were the result of progressive thinking on the part of probably half a dozen students. Further elimination of graft in student organizations has come from leaders who acted chiefly on their own initiative. The same might be said for other student activities. Their present sound state is more a result of thinking by a few leaders who feel some responsibility, than the result of thinking on the part of the large number of students connected with them.

As to student thinking about "broader human relationships in the social order," Dean Warnock expresses a view that the best preparation is to acquire some mastery of fundamental principles and historical backgrounds. There is no quarrel with this. But if by "fundamental principles" is meant the principles of the social sciences necessary for such thinking, just how many students here are acquiring any mastery? Students in the technical schools have very little opportunity to master the social science curricula or to acquire historical backgrounds. And many students in Liberal Arts and Education, even seniors and '3 students, would admit that they were far from a mastery of those subjects. Their time is taken up by other things.

There is no doubt that students do think about problems closest to them. A great many think about their next date, their grade in a course, or the outcome of an athletic event. A smaller number thinks about student activities, academic courses, or working their way through college. A very small number thinks seriously about the larger problems of student activities or about the problems of the social order. Just how the students in the first group are going to "widen out" is a mystery. It is difficult to see how an almost complete disregard of social and economic questions in college can lead to intelligent thought or leadership upon them afterward.

CHANGING STANDARDS

It is with great interest that the results of the admitted let-down of the entrance requirements of the College will be watched. The College has for a long time held an enviable position as an institution that has taken only the better-prepared students. In former years, there were always several hundred applicants that were refused admittance because of lack of necessary accommodations.

The sharp decrease in enrollment the past two years has caused an abrupt change of policy on the part of College authorities. In order to maintain the institution at its present plane of efficiency, a capacity number of students is necessary. For that reason, the doors were thrown open last fall to almost anyone who had completed the necessary four years of preliminary training.

It is apparent that the lower ability of the students will tend to produce a decidedly lower standard of scholarship. If the present standards are maintained, these inadequately prepared students will be unable to master the work. And if the courses are made less difficult, Penn State's academic standing might suffer.

The situation, however, is not so serious from an academic standpoint as it might appear. It must be remembered that almost every institution in the country is laboring under the same handicap: They, too, have been forced to accept a lower calibre student. Therefore, the standards of all institutions have been lowered proportionately.

Some readjustment seems to have come about in the student attitudes. A realization that their stay here is often problematical from semester to semester has been responsible for this change. A bit more seriousness is evidenced, together with a desire to benefit as much as possible from all courses rather than to acquire enough knowledge to pass. This attitude should go a long way in keeping the standards of the College at a comparable level.

-J. A. B.

OLD MANIA

The height of Penn State's social season has just passed, in case you haven't heard. Just about the two ritziest fraternities on this campus were dancing over the week-end. You know without asking, of course—the Thetas and (all together now) the BETAS. The Theta function was pretty swell we hear, even though it was held in the Phi Delt house and they had to import a couple of fellows from Pitt to give all the girls dates. And then too, Jack Davies, ex-man about Town, stayed home. But the Beta dance—ah!! What atmosphere! What handsome men and glittering women! The reason—the punch was spiked.

We've just uncovered another one of those vicious rackets that undermine student morality and lead to the kind of citizens who don't know the flag salute, etc. We dropped into a local drug store and discovered our worthy chief Yougel matching for Coca Colas with some of our own innocent students and laughing gleefully every time he paused to be refreshed.

HE COLLECTS THEM

Jim Norris is going around shaking hands with himself because he finally pawned off the most unpopular hat he ever owned. It seems as though during a recent week-end someone swiped his best topper and left a very junky lid in its place. It was pretty cold then and Jim had to accept the exchange and like it. Just the other day he found a mark who actually paid him \$2.50 for the thing. The buyer was no less than Avon King Burke, the lad with the pedigreed derby!

Two Phi Kappas and two University of Wisconsin co-eds are firm believers in the value of advertising. It seems that these two lassies from the Badger state were without dates for their coming Junior Prom, so they advertised for two handsome gents, giving specifications and adding that they would pay part or all expenses. The word got around and the item appeared in an "Oddities of the News" column in a Pottsville paper. The end of the story is obvious. Phi Kappas Booth and Wachter saw the notice, and wrote offering their services. They're leaving for Madison soon.

We peeped in Dr. Ritenour's x-ray room the other day and saw the following little tableaux. Two lads bear the victim in on a chair and place him near the ray machine. Le Docteur tells the boys to step to the rear so as not to get electrocuted or anything. And then our learned Dr. steps behind a screen and with a blushing face consults a treatise entitled, 'How to Operate An X-ray Machine'.

SHARDS

Nifty Nicholson and Theta go in for a little practice before the multitude at the Owen dance . . . and the Kappa pledge who signed for Phys. Ed. 4 . . . which happens to be a men's section . . . We heard that there are dice holes in the rugs at Varsity Hall . . . Lou Kreizman had to cut his finger-nails before the wrestling match here Saturday . . . Doris Sanford asked Cromwell '37 why he always wears a black tie . . .

-THE MANIAC

'Collegian' Letter Box

To the Editor:

"It is about time somebody came to the defense of the student body"—so spoke a COLLEGIAN editorial recently. It was speaking of the question of "student thinking." I suppose a similar sentence has appeared in student publications for a hundred years or so. Charging students with not thinking is one of our oldest college traditions.

Let's talk for a moment about thinking about student thinking. Do we understand our terms?

What do we mean by student thinking? I should say that with respect to those problems closest to them, Penn State students are thinking pretty straight these days. In spite of most trying conditions, the College program is going ahead in good style and quality; this fact means that students are thinking their way through numerous vexing problems. Undergraduate campus activities are in a sounder condition than perhaps they have ever been in; this fact means sound, progressive thinking by a lot of students.

No doubt this is not the kind of thinking we have in mind. Do we mean thinking about broader human relationships in the social order? If so, what do we mean by that kind of thinking?

There is a quaint idea held by some folks to the effect that the best way to begin intelligent thinking is to acquire some mastery of fundamental principles and historical backgrounds, and that in college that is done by seeking to acquire some mastery of fixed courses in the curriculum. If that idea is sound, to what extent are students thinking—or at least getting ready to think?

Do we mean thinking that is measured by the number of new ideas which students evolve or sponsor? By the extent to which they drop the day's job and fall to discussing more remote questions of possibly broader significance? Do we mean thinking that expresses itself in direct action?

As for my personal views, I have a prejudice in favor of the thinker who can begin his useful thinking with the problems closest to him in time and place, and can work out in ever widening circles toward general problems. The extent to which he can widen out should normally depend upon his education and intellectual grasp.

I, therefore, have a prejudice in favor of the undergraduate who—while not neglecting a critical interest in current problems in the social order—obviously recognizes the opportunity for his most patriotic service as someone in the future. Only in an extreme crisis can a commander afford to throw his training troops into action; in so doing he risks having no trained troops for the future. The crisis in our social order is not yet so extreme as to demand that our college undergraduates forsake the opportunities of the classroom and jump into current affairs actively. In my opinion a far more serious crisis may be precipitated when they come to maturity if, at that time, they must be classed among the unfit and ignorant because, while in college, they neglected their peculiar opportunity to study fundamental principles and historical backgrounds related to the problems

which they in their generation might have to meet. February 15, 1934. —A. R. Warnock

To the Editor:

May I say that I have been disappointed in some of the recent issues of the COLLEGIAN? What seems to be the matter with all those "intelligent" students who formerly made use of the Letter Box? Has ye honorable Editor acquired cold feet on the subject, or has someone squelched him? It has indeed been a pleasure, in the past, to observe the unusual absorptive qualities of a small part of our "modern and intelligent" student body. These gullible babes in the woods would make a salt water skate blush with shame by the manner in which they swallow hook, line and sinker when the bait of pacifist propaganda is flashed before their eyes by a few of our equally "intelligent" faculty members.

Several years ago the old bugaboo of war propaganda was constantly being peddled around us. But, has it occurred to these "broad-minded" persons that the old war propaganda isn't even a drop in the bucket as compared to the vicious pacifist propaganda to which this and other educational centers are now exposed? Not only that, but this same propaganda must needs be accompanied by the stench of Communism and Socialism. We used to find on our campus various discussion groups and liberal centers, but these no longer exist as such. They become, instead, propaganda channels through which "canned ideas," prepared outside, are poured in upon college students. The major source of such ideas is New York City where such bodies as the National Student League, controlled by Communists, and the League of Industrial Democracy, controlled by Socialists, hold sway. Here well-trained and mature experts in agitation direct the activities of student members and student organizations, e. g. our local Penn State Christian Association. Would some one care to explain just why the P. S. C. A. was dismissed from affiliation with the National Y. M. C. A.?

The P. S. C. A. and a few gullible shavetails on the Liberal Arts and Education faculties are the chief local "dispensers." Old General Beayer would turn over in his grave if he could see the mess of pacifist literature which has been disseminated from the room in Old Main which bears his name. The writer has quite a complete collection of such propaganda which was collected during the summer session of 1933 from this room. No doubt ye, Editor himself and possibly a few of his associates in the P. S. C. A. would have a few uneasy moments if they were thoroughly familiar with the activities of these New York associations.

It's bad enough when college students absorb such foul stuff, but when a few of our darling Liberal Arts instructors and assistant professors absorb it and pass it on to students in a returning cycle, the situation becomes rotten. Such individuals, students and faculty included, have obviously never had occasion to rub elbows successfully with this tough old world; in fact, if some of the latter were capable of doing so, they

wouldn't be at present tied to the apron strings of this man's College. I am not a pacifist, a socialist, or a communist, nor for that matter am I a militarist. But, I have sense enough to know that war is not prevented or cured by removing or cutting down the armed forces of the world, and doing away with our much belittled R. O. T. C. Our ancestors pounded each others heads long before they had armaments and military forces. Armed forces are the results of international friction and distrust, not the cause. As a little parody, likewise our diseases are the results of friction and internal disorders, yet we may as well try to cure chicken pox by cutting out the blisters as to cure war by cutting out the armed forces of the nations. All around us we hear talk of abolishing armed forces and military training, but the gentlemen, and ladies, evidently lack the sense or the nerve to discuss the real causes of war. Should this letter be printed, and a demand is created, the writer will be glad to go into the causes. They are very simple. One hundred and fifty years ago, Washington stated, "The surest way to an honorable peace is a state of preparation for war." This statement was never more true than today. This letter, if it should be printed, will undoubtedly call forth much comment and attack from the pacifists on the campus. I am strongly opposed to war, but I am not in favor of abolishing the military forces or military training as a means of preventing it. I stand ready to meet the arguments of all those who care to take the opposite side. —J. C. M. '34.

(Continued on page four)

Would it not seem evident from last Tuesday's COLLEGIAN that the Federal Government is capitulating to a world of imperialism and organized greed through an attempted militarization of college youth? (Exhibit A—the novel scheme to recondition the military facilities at land grant colleges with public funds.) Is it not fair, however, to ask if students living in the twentieth century ought to sanction or support this

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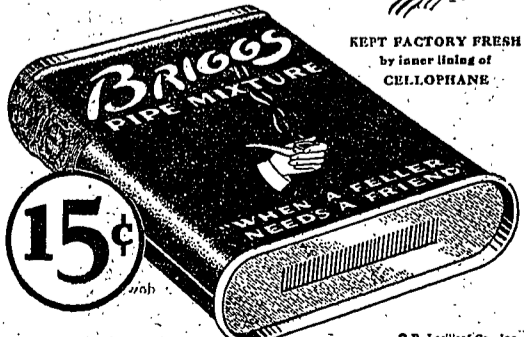
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