

An Apology Due

By JOHN LOTT
Collegian Editor

The signed column of last Friday written by Mel Ziegler about Prof. R. Wallace Brewster's Political Science 3 course has provoked a wave of letters and telephone calls from Dr. Brewster's colleagues and from students. If one conclusion can be drawn from this response, perhaps it is this: Dr. Brewster's reputation as an instructor, scholar and human being appears unassailable. What has been brought under serious question is the responsibility and judgment exercised by Editorial Editor Ziegler in writing the column, and by The Daily Collegian Editor in permitting such remarks to be published.

The Collegian has received letters from the Dean of the Liberal Arts College, from several political science professors, from the department's acting head expressing the feeling of the department as a whole, and from students who have

taken Dr. Brewster's course. We also have received a telephone call from an officer of the University chapter of the American Association of University Professors and several late-night anonymous calls. All the opinions expressed support of Dr. Brewster as a man of integrity whose teaching and published work is widely respected. And all protested and questioned the sense of responsibility displayed by the Collegian in this situation.

It has been pointed out that Dr. Brewster has long been a champion of student rights, especially in the realm of a free student press. It has been noted that his work in the AAUP has illustrated this, and that, indeed, Dr. Brewster has been one of the leading supporters of a student course evaluation program. His textbook, in addition to being hailed for excellence by the State Department, has also gained highly favorable critical reviews abroad.

In an attempt to offer constructive suggestions to improve the first

Course Evaluation booklet, Mel Ziegler chose a particular course and its professor as an example. Mr. Ziegler has taken the course and received an above-average grade. He himself has maintained a consistently high academic standing. He wrote on the assumption that these factors qualified him to make a critical evaluation.

Perhaps his approach and assumptions were unfortunate. Subsequent reaction has obviously made it embarrassing, not only to Dr. Brewster, but to The Daily Collegian as a whole. While Mr. Ziegler's basic aim was to point up the weaknesses of the course guide his overall comments have obviously appeared to some readers as an unprovoked attack on Dr. Brewster.

Such was not the intention. However, after reviewing the situation, The Daily Collegian Board of Editors believes it necessary to make public apology to Dr. Brewster for any unintended embarrassment stemming from this incident.



mellfluence

Course Evaluations

By MEL ZIEGLER
Editorial Editor

Last in a series

The student Course Evaluation booklet published last week has made a notable advance in the area of student involvement in academic affairs. But in its present format the booklet falls short of its maximum value.

A useful course evaluation will offer guidance both to the student pondering a choice of electives and instructors and to the professor in analyzing his own effectiveness.

Such generalizations as "it contributes (or does not contribute) to a well-rounded education" or "this course serves (or does not serve) as an adequate introduction" aren't really saying anything that will benefit either student or instructor. The booklet is filled with these useless ambiguities.

Currently courses are evaluated through questionnaires distributed among student enrollees with the statistical results religiously converted to prose form. The questionnaire is a collection of twenty yes-no answer-type questions, concluding with a solicitation for "additional comments".

As it is, however, the questionnaire is too rigid and inflexible and often irrelevant. A yes or no answer to such questions as "Do you think this course has contributed to your well-rounded education" or "Can you easily find the important material in the text?" will not necessarily provide an accurate indication. A new type of questionnaire which will require more than an overly-generalized response from the student, with space provided alongside the question for him to express his feelings in his own words will provide a more intensive analysis of the course.

The major failure in the first Course Evaluation booklet is evident with its use of compiled data. Once a more imaginative questionnaire is drafted, student reviewers responsible for writing the course summaries should be left with the freedom to convert the data into meaningful analyses, instead of the dry verbalized data that is now used.

Students in high academic standing who have completed the particular course they are reviewing with either an A or B grade should be employed to do the writing.

Another vital improvement for the course evaluation processes would be, to de-emphasize the classroom policies of the teacher in favor of more concern with his ability to arrange and deliver his material. Whether the instructor bases his exams on the text or his lectures is not nearly as important as the substance of the course.



Prejudiced Mellfluence

Note to Mr. Ziegler: Attached you will find a carbon of a letter to the editor. It will probably never find its way to print, therefore I felt obligated to send you a copy.

point I would like to focus attention on Mr. Ziegler's recent article, "Why a Professor Failed." I would like to ask Mr. Ziegler to clarify the basis from which he made his interpretation. Unless USG offered him additional data not presented in the "Evaluation," I see no reason to accept his conclusion that Dr. Brewster should be considered a failure. Mr. Ziegler, if he did not observe additional data, appears to be the failure. His article is so prejudiced and sensational in its approach. Such techniques, although they sell papers and create public interest, appear to be irresponsible. Certainly the license to editorialize implies some measure of responsibility. Unfortunately Mr. Ziegler did not seem to demonstrate his responsibility either to his many readers or to Dr. Brewster.

TO THE EDITOR: Two basic issues seemed to have emerged concerning the recent USG publication "Course Evaluation." The first concerns who shall judge. This issue concerning the qualifications one needs in order to offer responsible and constructive criticism has managed to generate sufficient controversy. Of equal importance, is the question concerning what should be done with the data once it has been collected and tabulated. I suggest that the data, as such, are "dumb," and will remain so until spoken for by an individual interested in answering a question or proving a point. Further, that researchers in both the collection and interpretation of data have an uncanny way of seeking what they want to see in the data; of abstracting in relation to their desires and expectations. In relation to the second

In conclusion I would submit that Mr. Ziegler needs to examine his own methods before undertaking to evaluate the methods of others.
—David E. Butt,
Instructor of speech

Brewster Analysis Called Critical Generalization

TO THE EDITOR: As a 5th term student majoring in Political Science and having had Dr. Brewster for Political Science 3, I would like to express my dissatisfaction with Mr. Ziegler's critical "Analysis" of Dr. Brewster and his course. Mr. Ziegler's desire to expose the Penn State student body and faculty to the "staleness" of Dr. Brewster's course, and to open our eyes to the "more prepared" incoming freshmen is indeed admirable. However, "mellfluence" has done little more than criticize, and his generalizations and simplifications of Political Science 3 and of the man who teaches it clearly reflect Mr. Ziegler's inability to balance resource and reason.

Granted, there is much room for improvement in Political Science 3, but I sincerely doubt the usefulness of such a method as Mr. Ziegler has employed. Rather, the products of his method may be resentment and dissatisfaction. Perhaps, strangely enough, these products may have even served as the motivating factors for this particular column of "mellfluence."

—William Strawn

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Restraint Urged

TO THE EDITOR: The Department of Political Science welcomes constructive criticism from any and all students of its course offerings. The members of the Department, however, are unanimous in deploring the unsubstantiated, unfounded and hominem attack upon an individual professor. The venomous nature of that attack could hardly serve a

constructive purpose. In the future, we hope that those who claim to write under the protection of free speech and free press will exercise the right with a degree of restraint and responsibility.

—William R. Monat
Acting Head
Department of
Political Science

Serious Abuse

TO THE EDITOR: The recent attack on Professor R. Wallace Brewster by Mel Ziegler is without doubt a serious abuse of freedom of the press.

One might be inclined to dismiss it as juvenile (and, as it turns out, ignorant) exercise in criticism were it not filled with malicious venom and unbridled viciousness.

Surely a responsible newspaper requires maximum standards of mature judgment.
—Raymond Ayoub
Professor of Mathematics



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TUESDAY, JANUARY 11, 1966

In Memory of William Jeffrey
Honorary Sigma Phi Alpha, 1934

If I have done any deed worthy of remembrance,
that deed will be my monument.

—Agesilaus

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