

The Collegiate

A NEWSPAPER OF IDEAS

The Great Debates?

Last Thursday night nearly one-hundred million Americans watched a debate between two men running for this nation's highest office, the presidency. What we saw was not impressive. It did not inspire confidence. One quickly realized that these two men were not of the intellectual elite, as were our forefathers; one also realized that these two men were one step away from the presidency because they were very wealthy, were willing contestants in the dehumanizing game of politics, and were able handlers of the mass media. Neither contestant exhibited the gravity of personality or the unshakeableness of ideal and conviction that a man like Abraham Lincoln must have exhibited as he stood at the podium in Freeport, Illinois in 1858, in a similar debate with Stephen A. Douglas. In short one saw that the Republican Gerald R. Ford and the Democrat Jimmy Carter were not necessarily the two men most capable of creatively handling a job as complex as the American presidency.

For this reason all Americans who are eligible to vote should carefully consider all of the minor party candidates. It is unfortunate that our democracy has developed a fairly rigid two party system. The candidates of the minor parties often go unheard in the monopolized roar of the two major parties. It is again unfortunate that these candidates, who often speak directly and plainly to the issues, are ignored while the general populace is force-fed the garbage created by the major candidates "media-men." Is Susan Ford having an affair? Do Jimmy Carters' eyes brighten when he thumbs through an issue of Playboy? What does it matter?

So when you go to the polls this November, go with a good understanding of all the candidates, down to the smallest party, and vote for the man or woman you feel most truly qualified for the job, even if you know that he or she will almost certainly be beaten by Ford or Carter (if they are not your choice). This represents a true vote, not one "bought" by the effects of the mass media.

Fred Claridge

Are Senators Responsive?

The senate is probably the most exclusive club in America. It seems that besides the requirements set by the constitution, the requirement of wealth has also been added. Of the one-hundred senators, thirty-eight are millionaires. The mean average of the other sixty-two is above the two-hundred thousand dollar figure. The fact that so many senators are millionaires and that the rest are of considerable wealth raises an important question. How sensitive can the senate really be to the problems facing middle-America?

Those men are experts in various fields and they bring to government vast amounts of knowledge from their fields. They understand the stock market, tax bases, and defense contracts; but can they understand how it feels to be unemployed, paying high utility bills, and living in poor housing? Senators are too far removed economically to properly understand the issues that confront the majority of Americans. The senate is supposed to be a representative body, but who do they represent? Can they speak for people they do not know? Can they speak for people they share almost nothing with?

The fallacy equating wealth with leadership must be put to rest! Unresponsive, rich bureaucrats must not continue to be elected. Men and women who know and share the problems of middle-America must be elected instead. If they are not, cries for assistance will continue to fall on deaf ears.

Alfred Sutton

The Collegiate

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The Gradeless University Examined

By ROBERT M. PIRSIG

Phaedrus' argument for the abolition of the degree-and-grading system produced a nonplussed or negative reaction in all but a few students at first, since it seemed, on first judgment, to destroy the whole University system. One student laid it wide open when she said with complete candor, "Of course you can't eliminate the degree and grading system. After all, that's what we're here for."

She spoke the complete truth. The idea that the majority of students attend a university for an education independent of the degree and grades is a little hypocrisy everyone is happier not to expose. Occasionally some students do arrive for an education but rote and the mechanical nature of the institution soon converts them to a less idealistic attitude.

The demonstrator was an argument that elimination of grades and degrees would destroy this hypocrisy. Rather than deal with generalities it dealt with the specific career of an imaginary student who more or less typified what was found in the classroom, a student completely conditioned to work for a grade rather than for the knowledge the grade was supposed to represent.

Such a student, the demonstrator hypothesized, would go to his first class, get his first assignment and probably do it out of habit. He might go to his second and third as well. But eventually the novelty of the course would wear off and, because his academic life was not his only life, the pressure of other obligations or desires would create circumstances where he just would not be able to get an assignment in.

Since there was no degree or grading system he would incur no penalty for this. Subsequent lectures which presumed he'd completed the assignment might be a little more difficult to understand, however, and this difficulty, in turn, might weaken his interest to a point where the next assignment, which he would find quite hard, would also be dropped. Again no penalty.

In time his weaker and weaker understanding of what the lectures were about would make it more and more difficult for him to pay attention in class. Eventually he would see he wasn't learning much; and facing the continual pressure of outside obligations, he would stop studying, feel guilty about this and stop attending class. Again, no penalty would be attached.

But what had happened? The student, with no hard feelings on anybody's part, would have flunked himself out. Good! This is what should have happened. He wasn't there for a real education in the first place and had no real business there at all. A large amount of money and effort had been saved and there would be no stigma of failure and ruin to haunt him the rest of his life. No bridges had been burned.

The student's biggest problem was a slave mentality which had been built into him by years of carrot-and-whip grading, a mule mentality which said, "If you don't whip me, I won't work." He didn't get whipped. He didn't work. And the cart of civilization, which he supposedly was being trained to pull, was just going to have to creak along a little slower without him.

This is a tragedy, however, only if you presume that the cart of civilization, "the system," is pulled by mules. This is a common, vocational, "location" point of view, but it's not the Church attitude.

The Church attitude is that civilization, or the "system" or "society" or whatever you want

to call it, is best served not by mules but by free men. The purpose of abolishing grades and degrees is not to punish mules or to get rid of them but to provide an environment in which that mule can turn into a free man.

The hypothetical student, still a mule, would drift around for a while. He would get another kind of education quite as valuable as the one he'd abandoned, in what used to be called the "school of hard knocks." Instead of wasting money and time as a high-status mule, he would now

have to get a job as a low-status mule, maybe a mechanic. Actually his real status would go up. He would be making a contribution for a change. Maybe that's what he would do for the rest of his life. Maybe he'd found his level. But don't count on it.

In time — six months; five years, perhaps — a change would easily begin to take place. He would become less and less satisfied with a kind of dumb day-to-day shopwork. His

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Viewpoint

The Possibility of Utopia

The idea of a Utopian society is a dream that has been with man since the beginning of his philosophical thought. But we ask ourselves the question; is a Utopian society obtainable, is it feasible? If, like me, you are an Emersonian optimist you will say yes, it is possible, but not probable.

In order to have a Utopian society, mankind will have to undergo a drastic and radical realignment of his ideals, society, and values. Since the beginning of time man has tried to develop systems of government that lend themselves to this concept of Utopia. Every government tries to effect a Utopia of its own. But governments can not bring about Utopia. In fact it is a prerequisite to a Utopian society that governments be abolished. Until mankind can rid himself of the need of government, until he can purge himself of an aggressive nature, and until man can develop in himself a deep sense of humanity, brotherhood and kinship with his environment there can be no Utopia. When man can elevate himself to the level of existence in which he can exist peaceably with all things and will willingly help another because the other would willingly help him, then he can begin to think of a Utopian society.

As long as there are governments, nations, and nationalities there can be no such ordered society as a Utopia. While governments exist, there will be conflict between them. As long as there are conflicts, there will be hatred. As long as there is hatred, there will be prejudice. As long as there is prejudice, we will have to live in this most barbarous and animalistic form of life we call civilized society.

Hence, as stated earlier and as pointed out by Robert Wilson in an earlier edition of the Collegiate, the changes must come from within the individual. Each and every individual must concentrate on making himself a better person, and on co-existing peacefully with all. We must base our new personalities on honour, integrity, justice, respect for life, and respect for each other. This is an extremely radical concept, but when every individual in the world does this, there will be a fusing together of all men in a fraternal (for lack of a better word) kinship and a Utopian society will naturally emerge and establish itself.

Mike Walker

