

## Opinions and Editorials

# Literature adds to an education

The successful completion of a course in either British or American literature should be included among the graduation requirements for any degree from North Carolina Wesleyan College. We agree with the statement printed in the "Statement of Institutional Purpose" section of Wesleyan's catalog which states in part, "...We believe the breadth of learning is a practical preparation for life and education is a lifelong process..."

It is this breadth of learning or the comprehensiveness of a liberal arts education that suggests the need for a literature requirement.

Perhaps George Santayana, Spanish author and philosopher, said it best in his book *Little Essays*, "To turn events into ideas is the function of literature." The very essence of a degree from a liberal arts college seems to be expressed in Santayana's writing.

If the Wesleyan graduate is to be expected to benefit himself and society by striving for and finding new ideas, then the role that literature currently plays in his education at Wesleyan has to be expanded. Somewhere in the

average of 124 semester hours required for graduation, at least one literature course should be completed.

The math or psychology major may not initially see a need for a course in literature. We would suggest that to be well-founded in any discipline is to study that discipline from a historical perspective as well as from a theoretical one.

Studying the literature from a specific period allows the student to understand the prevailing attitudes and cultural changes that preceded some of mankind's greatest discoveries. For example, the psychology student may benefit from a study of the literature concerning the status of women in society during the time that Freud was developing his psychological theories.

Literature's relative position among the arts was addressed by Walt Whitman in 1871. Whitman wrote in *Democratic Vistas*, "In the civilization of today it is undeniable that, over all the arts, literature dominates, serves beyond all." We believe this statement to be even more significant in 1986.

## Checkmate

By The Archbishop

No, this is not an ordinary newspaper article. None of that boring, right to the point news everybody dreads to read. This so-called column is designed to open the minds of those involved in N.C. Wesleyan activities.

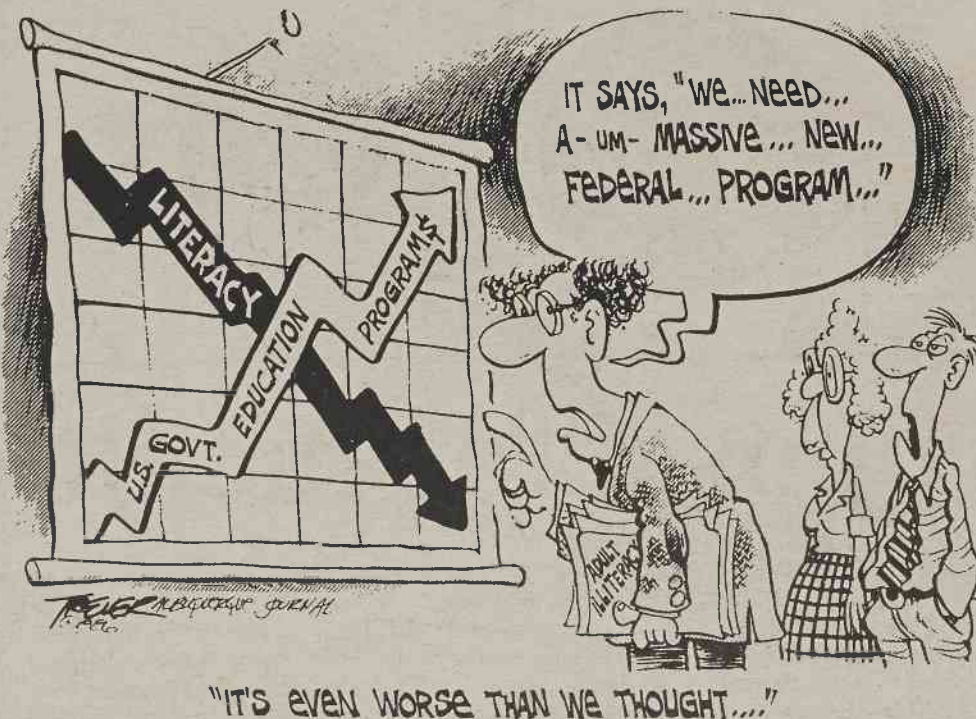
Hopefully, people will enjoy picking up a newspaper and scrambling to the column to find out about an enlightening event. Of course, to be accurate the truth must be told, whether it be why we do not have a swimming pool yet or why there are so many "acting" officials on campus.

Yes, I know this is a totally different way to approach what is going on at large, or is that small? This newspaper is a marvelous device that will be used to get knowledge that must be heard to the public, whether or not it means getting a couple of people upset. You just cannot outrun the

"long arm" of the press. As members of the N.C. Wesleyan community, I hope everyone will appreciate the unrestricted news that this column will deal with.

Unrestricted news means no holds barred. These issues will be ones that should involve everyone at N.C. Wesleyan or be important to everyone, but they will be discussed in a humorous fashion that should be enjoyable to read. Definitely not your ordinary "square" reporter talking from origins unknown. This will be down to earth and right in your own back yard, where a lot of issues are occurring, unreported.

There will, most likely, be objections to the issues dealt with in this column. I am sure that the editor will be more than happy to print your appropriate editorials and opinions. Conflicts with the views of the columnist? Why, of course? That is truly what this is all about.



## Education has moral side

By MARK LEDBETTER

I am committed to the belief that the small liberal arts college must hear the highest of callings and must educate not only the minds of its men and women but also the hearts. The call resounds through the halls of Wesleyan College: Do not forget the moral dimension of education." And I say this not as a campus minister nor as a teacher of religion, but as someone committed to the total task of education.

James Joyce writes in *The Portrait of An Artist As a Young Man*, "Aquinas says: 'pulcritudinem tri requiruntur, integritas, consonantia, charitas.' I translate it so: three things are needed for beauty, wholeness, harmony, and radiance." Invoking Aquinas, Joyce is evoking an aesthetics of salvation, an idea of salvation that is grounded in *scientia*, a knowledge of arts and science. Etymologically, salvation comes from the Latin root *salvus*, a word meaning health and wholeness. Wesleyan is in the terrifying position of participating in the salvific process. Educationally, are we helping people to become healthy and whole creatures?

I think that Joyce has something to say to those of us who make our homes in higher education. Education, in the broadest sense of the word, must have a salvific vision, in salvation's original sense. While we in liberal arts education must never be moral watchdogs, we must accept the responsibility of addressing the moral questions that the education process raises.

I am suggesting that if liberal arts education in general and Wesleyan in particular are to take on an aesthetic beauty, if we at Wesleyan are to exude a radiance — a clarity of critical inquiry — then there must be respect for the moral vision I believe is endemic to the academic setting and the

educational endeavor.

The most critical question for the scholar and the student, after tireless critical inquiry, is, "What does my work and the fruits of my work mean?" Annie Dillard says, "It may be naive to ask what we can learn from *Othello*, but it is decadent not to." And morality plays a major role in the question of meaning.

I am convinced that those of us in education have the power and obligation to shake the foundations of society, and we must do so responsibly and with integrity. But we can only do so by moving from our present-day stance of being aesthetically detached from the world to a position that is aesthetically attached to the world. We must get our hands dirty, if you will, in the world's everydayness and confront the pervading sense of boredom that afflicts the present state of academia, particularly liberal arts education.

To teacher and student, to scientist, professional, and humanist, I say that education must stand in tension with the culture that produces it and must be constructively critical of the norms and values of the world of which it is a part. The Wesleyan

experience must provide us with a way of looking at the world; the Wesleyan experience must also provide us with possibilities for living in the world.

Yet commitment to moral education raises a dilemma, one of which I am acutely aware. How do we discuss the moral visions inherent in our disciplines and not stifle the creative imagination nor sound egotistical and dogmatic?

James Laney says that "to speak of virtue in education does not necessarily entail being ideological or doctrinaire. Nor does it imply being moralistic." While temptation is constant that we provide the moral answers from atop our towers in the educational setting, this is not what I am suggesting at all. Rather, Wesleyan, as an institution of higher education, must raise and address the moral issues of human existence. We must affirm that life has a moral dimension.

At all costs, Wesleyan must avoid moral platitudes and dogma. But at the cost of our salvation, our healthy sense of well being, we must address the pervasively, obvious moral questions that are a part of the learning and maturing process of the human creature.

## The Decree

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Editorial Board — Eva Bartley, Donald Martin, Matt McKown,  
Barry Nethercutt, Christopher Ostling, Tom Rivers, Linda Smith,  
Laura-Lee Spedding, Greg Williams.

Illustrator — David Gilliam

Photographers — Glenn Futrell, Steve Wiggins

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