

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

'A's Mean More Learning

To the Editor:

Are some of the faculty and administrators at Guilford so concerned with becoming a Davidson College or Duke University that they can't recognize good things once they happen? A recent front-page article concerning a rise in grades at Guilford reported distress among Academic Dean Sam Schuman and Political Science Professor William Carroll. Both indicated that there's something basically wrong with more students achieving 'A's and 'B's.

"Top colleges and universities," such as Davidson and Duke, have a reputation of being tough, stringent graders. To earn an 'A' at these schools is extremely stressful and tortuous and 'D's and 'F's are common. It's a bit odd that many failures and few successes are characteristic of our "top" schools. If students at our "top" schools receive lower grades AND lower grades indicate less learning, then our better schools are those where less learning occurs.

I assume that Guilford actively seeks to obtain the best possible professors available. I also assume that being able to stimulate student learning is a primary quality of the best professors. Thus, if Guilford has used considerable energy in staffing the best professors and "... grades have become steadily higher over the past 25 years," isn't it at least possible that more student learning is going on?

However, I don't see a celebration at the arrival of higher grades. Some professors find them peculiar and distressful. Perhaps they are suspicious of high grades because they have never experienced a classroom full of learning. Professor Carroll stated, "Ideally, if more than 50 percent of our students are getting 'A's or 'B's, then there is something wrong." I contend, however, that if a professor is capable of engaging students in inquiring and learning, then students and professors alike deserve good grades.

Professor Carroll also remarked, "It makes an 'A' or 'B' less valuable—if there are more out there." To put a label of 'A,' 'B,' 'C,' 'D' or 'F' on someone else's learning experience is a difficult and somewhat absurd task. And treating this grade as a commodity which has a higher or lower value depending on the amount supplied is plainly ludicrous. In an editorial column, Colman McCarthy outlines the reasoning of such an argument: "Students are customers. Some have the money to buy the three credits, some don't. Teachers who hand in grade sheets with too many 'A's and not enough 'F's can be seen as cheapening the product. The department chairman is the board chairman. Make credits worth something to the majority by denying it to a minority."

I don't claim to know that there's more learning at Guilford today than 25 years ago. But to look at increasing grades with immediate suspicion and displeasure is a knee-jerk reaction. The issue demands a lot more thought.

Troy A. Martin

Sign Disrespectful

To the Editor:

The following sign was posted in Milner Hall last week by Senate secretary, Jason Smith:

"Announcement: There is an open slot for a Milner

representative to Senate. Those interested should get a petition at the info. desk and turn it in to Jason Smith (Box 17583, ph# 294-8652) by Wednesday, Jan. 30. Girly men need not apply."

This sign raises several serious issues:

1. It suggests that Senate is seeking a particular type of person to fill the position, when in fact, all Milner residents are encouraged to apply.

2. Smith is an elected student leader, and his choice of words is careless, not thoughtful.

3. The term "girly men" not only functions to perpetuate society's narrow perception of manhood, but also labels traits which deviate from this stereotype as woman-affiliated and, thus, undesirable. Further, this sign's equation of "girls" (women) with inferiority is unacceptable.

In short, the sign does not show respect for persons on this campus.

Leslie Burnside

Bring Friends Home Safe

To the Editor:

I wish to respond to Brian Moser's letter pertaining to the effects that the protest movement has on the troops. I'm not writing to bash his views, but to explain why I joined the peace movement. It wasn't an easy choice for me. It wasn't a choice without tears. Some may wonder why a person such as myself, already fairly disillusioned with the U.S. government, thought twice about joining the protest movement. My hesitancy did not arise from any personal political insight, but from how such actions would affect the troops. I am constantly re-evaluating for myself what "supporting" the troops means, because there are obviously differing viewpoints.

I have a friend from high school in Saudi Arabia. I think about what must be going through his mind right now. Yes, if I was over there and was ordered to kill and risk my life, I'd want to believe that the American people were behind me. It's a horrible time to be uncertain. However, we mustn't just be concerned of the troops' psychological well-being before going into battle, but during the battle and afterwards as well. What will happen to the troops "morale" when they see their friends' guts being blown out over the desert sands? What will happen when they see the corpses of children that will have been unintentionally bombed or shot at?

Moser speaks of the futility of protesting the war. I can't say that many of us in the movement don't feel that our pleas are falling on deaf ears. Personally, I feel that if one individual begins thinking about what war means to this country and to the Middle East as a result of protest activities, then they are not in vain. If America is still a democracy, then our government must listen to the conscience of the country.

I don't pretend to believe that I hold the "correct" moral vision regarding war. I don't know if human society or myself as an individual can ever escape violence. I don't know if this peaceful world utopia we all say we want is an attainable goal. I do know that I just can't keep going on with my life while I feel like reaching over this war every five minutes. I also know that when I see my friend again, I don't want him to be in a casket with an American flag draped over it.

Karen Cummins

Why I Protest

To the Editor:

I would like to respond to Brian Moser's article "Support U.S. Forces." He has raised a very important issue and a sticky one for those against the war in the Middle East or any war. He asks people to consider what the war protests mean to the troops and say, "ask yourselves, 'Am I really supporting U.S. Troops?'"

Well, I have been thinking about this issue—a lot—and the same question keeps coming back again and again. How can I, with a clear conscience, support the troops when I don't support *any* war for *any* reason? I can work to bring them home as soon as possible by working for a cease-fire. But this would not resolve the issue. How should we respond to the soldiers if and when they return? To turn our backs and ignore them would be wrong for they will need much care and attention emotionally and psychologically as they try to assimilate back into civilian life. On the other hand, to give them a hero's welcome would be equally wrong because it would affirm their involvement in the killing of other people and teach the wrong lesson to the generations to come.

As Karen Cummins said while we were mulling over this problem, "If I were risking my life fighting in Saudi Arabia, I would want to know that I was doing the right thing." I cannot affirm their actions as soldiers. But for those who come back alive, I hope they get the best physical and psychological help possible and not be neglected. I feel this is the best way the troops can be supported.

I do what I can to protest the war and by example teach future generations that war is not a viable method of problem-solving and then, perhaps, the issue of supporting the troops, any troops, will become obsolete.

Cynthia A. Swartz

Concern for Troops

To the Editor:

I am writing in response to Brian Moser's letter. Since the beginning of this crisis I have heard a great deal of concerns about the psychological welfare of the troops. What are the effects of making them wait in the desert? What are the effects of letting them know that some people in their country do not support what they are fighting for? But I ask, what are the psychological effects of being forced to kill another human being, of seeing your friend shot dead, of dying yourself?

A family friend of mine is a physician in a veteran's hospital. Every day she has routine check-ups with World War II veterans, and every day she hears of chronic sleep disorders, depression and other problems. She hears men relive again and again the horrors they experienced in war. World War II was a war that was considered unquestionably just, with tremendous support from the American people. The troops were supported in every way possible. But many of their lives were still shattered. The root of the problem is not the attitudes back home, but the fact that these people are being forced to kill and to die.

That is why I believe that the only way to support the troops is to bring them home.

Rebecca A. Grunko