

The Eclipse of Excellence

"American higher education stands on the brink of chaos. Never have so many spent so long learning so little." So writes Prof. Steven M. Cahn, chairman of the philosophy department at the University of Vermont and author of *The Eclipse of Excellence*, in a recent issue of the *New York Times*.

Prof. Cahn says the present crisis stems from a widespread "fatal educational principle" that a student should not be required to do any academic work that displeases him. Faculty members and administrators across the U.S. have bowed to student pressure for the easy route to a bachelor's degree complete with high grades.

If a student prefers not to take exams, he makes special arrangements with his professor or chooses courses from a growing number that have no exams. If he prefers that his work not be graded, he selects the pass-fail courses. If he is concerned about high marks, or easy courses, he signs up with instructors who indiscriminately give A's and B's to everyone.

What troubles Prof. Cahn, among others, is that colleges that say they provide "a liberal education" are not requiring the self-discipline and hard work that becoming educated demands. Actually, he insists, the easy road is "no more than a detour to the dead end of ignorance."

Of course, there can be joy in learning as there is in sport. But in both instances, the joy is a result of overcoming "genuine challenges" that cannot be experienced without toil. "It is painful to have one's ignorance exposed and frustrating to be baffled by intellectual subtleties," the professor writes.

If a person is to learn intellectual responsibility, he must "be taught to recognize that not every piece of work is a good piece of work. In fact, some work is just no good at all." Prof. Cahn believes that teachers let the personality of the student affect their critical powers. If the student is friendly, cooperative, and means well, they tend not to criticize him for inadequate performances. "Such criticism, when well-founded and constructive, is in no way demeaning, for the willingness to accept it and learn from it is one mark of a mature individual. Yet criticism of any sort is rare nowadays," he says.

One reason for the ingratiating attitude of professors towards students is the increased weight being given to student evaluations of faculty members, Prof. Cahn thinks. Indeed, he says, college education is resembling Alice's Caucus-race in Wonderland in which everyone begins running when he likes and stops when he likes. There are no rules. Yet everyone wins and everyone gets a prize.

Finally, what Prof. Cahn sees as the outcome of such chaos and irresponsibility is the rapid decay of democracy. For the success of a democracy depends upon the understanding and capability of its citizens. And in this complex world, such understanding and capability depend upon rigorous education.

In the next issue, the *Pendulum* will examine some of Prof. Cahn's arguments in the light of attitudes and practices at Elon College. We invite your comments and suggestions.

Tips on Conserving Energy As Electricity Costs Soar

By Jayne Freeman

If Elon seems darker and a bit cooler to you, don't be alarmed; it's just the college's way of conserving electricity and gas. Everyone is aware that heating fuel and electricity will be in short supply this winter.

In order to be of least inconvenience to everyone, and to operate as scheduled throughout the winter months, Larry B. McCauley, Sr., director of the physical plant, has planned a timetable for the heating system. During the daylight hours all thermostats will be set at 68°. The thermostats will drop to 60° at night. For the dorms the night temperatures will last 11 p.m. to 6 a.m. Everyone is encouraged to keep all windows and doors closed. Plenty of blankets and warm robes should keep everyone comfortable.

In order to save electricity, alternate lights in all halls have been turned off. Everyone is asked not to burn lights or appliances unnecessarily.

While the college has reduced the amount of kilowatt hours consumed, Duke Power Company has raised its rates as has Piedmont Natural Gas Company. From June to September 1973 Elon used 1,541,600 kwh compared to the same period in 1974 when Elon used only 1,199,606 kwh. This is 22% fewer units, yet the cost in 1973 was \$18,700 compared to \$22,367 for 1974. This is a 20% rise in cost. At the present rate of use and no further rise in costs, Mr. McCauley predicts that the college will pay \$70,000 to Duke Power Co. for 1974 compared to \$58,056 for 1973.

Elon is well stocked in its fuel supply. When there is a cold wave, the natural gas is used only for residential areas. At these times Elon converts to fuel oil. Last year the fuel tanks were increased from 12,000 to 82,000-gallon capacity. If everyone conserves, we should make it through the winter without any difficulty.

Tips on conserving energy for the winter:

- * Use lower voltage appliances.
- * Wear sweaters and warm robes and pajamas in the dorm.
- * Open blinds during the day for solar heat, and close in the evening for holding heat.
- * Drive only when and where necessary.
- * Turn off all unnecessary lights and appliances.
- * When possible, wash clothes in cold water.
- * Use washing machines and dryers with full loads only.

Figures Released in Fall Survey Reveal Student Use of Library

A library use survey released by the Library Committee for the fall semester shows that general circulation of all library items increased by more than 5,000. At the same time, books loaned for home use decreased by 427. Reserve books circulated were up by 3972.

Of the books loaned for home use, those on the arts led the percentage list, and the next most used were general geography and history, the social sciences, literature, and fiction including children's literature.

The reserve book survey at the end of the semester shows that 896 items were placed on reserve for 32 courses during the fall semester and were circulated 5167 times or an average of 5.7 times each. Of the reserve items, 178 or 19.9 per cent were never used, and 50.8 per cent were used fewer than six times. About 83 per cent of the loans of reserve materials were made to students of four faculty members.

On two days in the fall, the librarians made a chart of every item circulated to students, faculty, and other persons. On Oct. 11 the total number circulated was 1258 of which 847 were used by students, 257 by faculty, and 154 by others. On Nov. 11, 1331 items were used of which 945 went to students, 250 to faculty, and 136 to others.

A questionnaire was distributed to students in 10:10 MWF classes at the end of the semester. The 12 questions were designed to reveal the student's relationship to the college (class and living conditions), his major field, how often he came to the library, why he came, what materials he came to use, and what his attitude toward the library was. A total of 714 questionnaires was tabulated.

Answers showed that 42.3 per cent visited the library more than once a week; 57.7 per cent went there once a week or less often; and 20.2 per cent visited once a month or less often.

In saying why they came "most often," about one-third of the students said "to find and read material required for a course;" to do research for a paper or report, 17.2 per cent; to do homework with their own books, 23.1 per cent; to study for a test or exam, 15.4 per cent; and to have material copied (Xeroxed), 1.5 per cent.

The report revealed that 6.4 per cent never visited the library to find and read material for a course; 7.8 per cent never came to do research for a paper; 22 per cent never used scholarly journals; 20.2 per cent never used popular magazines; 30 per cent never read the newspapers; 23.9 per cent never used reserve books; 14 per cent never used reference books; 83 per cent never used microfilm; 9.5 per cent never used books; and 68.4 per cent never used audiovisual materials.

The Library Committee promises further surveys in an attempt to see how the library materials are being used. Dr. Carl Ficken, assistant professor of English, is chairman.

College Faculty Approves Leadership Honor Society

By Paige Garriques

A third honor society is to be created on the Elon campus which will recognize and encourage the development of leadership qualities in students.

Dr. James Moncure, vice-president of Elon College who has taken the initiative in promoting the Leadership Honor Society, feels there is a need for "constructive leadership" within the American society, and that college should offer an environment which will motivate people to become leaders. The other honor societies on campus are Alpha Chi, scholarship, and

Pi Gamma Mu, social science.

After three months of work by student leaders, the Elon faculty approved the establishment of the Elon College Leadership Honor Society at its January meeting. Jim Little drew up a constitution based on the guidelines of ODK, a national leadership society.

The purpose of the society will be to give recognition to individuals who have attained a high standard of leadership in college activities while maintaining high academic standards. The society will also encourage students to continue

in this endeavor and to inspire others to strive for similar attainments.

The eligibility requirements for admission are junior or senior standing, class rank in the upper 35 per cent in scholarship, and special distinction in at least one of these areas of student life: scholarship; athletics; social, service and religious activities; campus government; journalism; speech and the mass media; creative and performing arts.

Dr. Moncure hopes that this leadership honor society will "sensitize the student body" and make students aware of the moral and ethical issues involved in choosing the best leaders as well as developing leadership qualities within themselves.

The Pendulum

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Death and Life To Be Forum Topic Feb. 26

If I must some day die, what can I do to satisfy my desire to live? With this question, John S. Dunne, whom *Newsweek* called "the only modern American theologian who has attempted a systematic analysis of death," explores this basic concern of mankind.

Dr. John S. Dunne will be featured speaker at a Liberal Arts Forum program on Wednesday evening, Feb. 26 at 8 p.m. in Whitley. He is a member of the faculty of Notre Dame University, winner of the Harbison Award for distinguished teaching, and the author of four books: *The City of the Gods*, *A Search for God in Time and Memory*, *The Way of All the Earth*, and *Time and Myth*.

"Death and the Life Story" will be the topic of his address at Elon. The Liberal Arts Forum urges everyone to hear this provocative speaker.