HANSZEN PRESIDENT

On Pride And Rights

By DAVID TILSON

There has been some campus debate over the worth of the Academic Freedom project. The editor calls it "an honor and a great opportunity;" and a college president dismisses it as "buswork."

We seem to be faced with two different conceptions of student government. Type A seems to be primarily concerned with student participation in the policy decisions of the University—with expanding the "area of student responsibility." Type B, criticized as short-sighted, has as its first goal making particular concrete improvements in the welfare of the Rice student.

FOR EXAMPLE, Type A considers student participation in the administrative decision concerning integration at Rice a matter of paramount importance. Type B is first concerned with creating an atmosphere within the colleges in which a student's sojourn at Rice can be a pleasant and beneficial experience. Type B would maintain that the typical student cares much less about his "rights" than about his college creating for him a physical plant and a general atmosphere of which he can be proud. Considered by the lights of Type B, a project for academic freedom is of little more than academic interest.

I can illustrate the feelings of Type B by expressing some of my own prejudices. I would be prouder of a good chorus and a good intramural football team in my college than I would if the smiling face of NSA said, "Yes, you have a dynamic and progressive student government."

I WOULD BE prouder of an orderly and graceful evening meal in my college than of student participation in the integration decision.

I would be prouder of an atmosphere of cordiality, intellectual growth, and solidarity in my college than of a charter of my inalienable rights.

I would be prouder, to be the president of a gentleman's college than to have an explicitly formulated manifesto describing the spheres of student autonomy in university policy formation.

THEREFORE, with President Thom, "I deplore this talk of stimulating discussions of academic freedom." Instead, I would applaud stimulating discussions of how the education of a student could be augmented by his college.

Obviously I have overstated the case and, to some extent, invented a Type A to make my own position more intelligible by comparison. The Senate, when occupied with the problems of course evaluation and discipline of Rice organizations, is pursuing the goals of Type B.

ON THE OTHER hand, Type A in its pure form was greatly evidenced by last year's Senate leaders and is occasionally suggested by current editorial policy. Type A is important. Without some measure of autonomy and
(Continued from Page 3) “rights,” the colleges and Senate could not pursue the immediate goals of Type B. Since Types A and B are theoretically compatible and even complementary, why not have both?

I would be delighted to have both! As an individual with a finite amount of energy to expend, I must decide where I shall direct my efforts; but I certainly would not obstruct an academic freedom project. I do wish to raise the question of what is most important. What relative weight should we attach to the goals of Types A and B in composing the total complex of student government? Is it not the case that, as Thom remarks, the decibel level of Type A exaggerates its real importance?