FACULTY SOUND-OFF

What The Cards Don’t Tell

By DR. GASTON V. RIMLINGER
Associate Professor of Economics

Recent Thresher editorials have expressed strong feelings about certain weaknesses of the faculty, particularly in the Humanities. I personally welcome thoughtful expressions of this kind. Although I can speak for only one member of the faculty, I am sure that many others are quite interested in the students' views on such problems. Similarly, I hope, the students may be interested in the views faculty members may have about student attitudes and conduct, especially with regard to academic matters.

SINCE THIS seems to be the season to talk about weaknesses, I shall not bother with the praiseworthy qualities of the student body. For our internal purposes we need not talk about them. We'll save that speech for outsiders; for them we can flash the IBM cards with all those high College Board scores.

Meanwhile, let's go back to see what's not on those cards. It does not say on them that an alarming number of Rice students do not have the faintest trace of intellectual curiosity. It does not show on those cards that far too many undergraduates have a deplorably low degree of sophistication in political, economic, and social matters; that they stubbornly ignore numerous opportunities to broaden their views in these areas; and that a discouraging number would be shocked to find themselves developing a tough intellectual stand on their own convictions or sense of intellectual involvement.

YES, I KNOW, it's not all the students' fault. The faculty, and especially the colleges, must share in the responsibility. But in the end it is the students' fault, and they should be told so, at least once in a judicious while. It is their fault that they have not rewarded the admirable efforts of the Student Forum with more numerous attendance. It is their fault when only a half dozen show up at a promising public lecture. Who else is to blame when the life of a program like the "book of the semester" hinges on the heroic efforts of two or three resolute enthusiasts? Why is it so hard to induce students to undertake independent study programs?

I obviously refuse to accept the argument that the students are overworked, although I readily agree that many overwork themselves. And if we cut the assignments in half, they would still overwork themselves; they would still charge the grade curve with the same competitive gallantry. For it is not just an exaggerated concern with grades that is at issue but a detrimental approach to learning and a misconception of an educated person. This is intentionally a one sided portrayal of student attitudes, and the complaints are hardly new to student ears. But students do tend to forget all too conveniently how much of the problem can be solved only by themselves.