Rice’s Ills — A Failure of Communication?

By MEL LACK

During a five-hour trip to Ft. Worth this past weekend, I had plenty of time to read and digest the two articles on the editorial page of the latest Thresher, one by Mr. H. R. Kelly and one by Dr. G. V. Rimlinger.

Mr. Kelly cited a question asked by Rice professors, “Where are our zealots?” Dr. Rimlinger asked, “What happened to intellectual curiosity—if there ever was any?” Mr. Kelly pointed an accusing finger at the Rice grading system in answer to the question, while Dr. Rimlinger looked sternly at the students.

Rice is not unusual, and this problem exists elsewhere. However, let us examine the Rice situation:

FIRST OF ALL, I don’t believe one can pinpoint a specific aspect of our student society and call it “the dirty factor.” Instead, fault lies within a number of areas which, if correlated, could easily promote this “intellectual curiosity.”

Education has always been a mutual thing. Encouragement on the part of a professor usually prompts a response on the part of a student and vice versa. How many professors make any effort whatever to ENCOURAGE their students to attend all-school lectures, even the better ones? From my own experience, I would say very few.

TAKE AS AN EXAMPLE the Economics Department of which Dr. Rimlinger is a member. With the exception of a very small group, mainly economics majors, few Rice students realize that the Economics Dept. has sponsored and scheduled a series of speakers in conjunction with the Semi-centennial.

These men who have been and will be coming to the campus are the better economists of our day: Boulding, Kuznets, Machlup. Yet the colleges received no schedule, no resume on the speakers, until they requested it. At best, an announcement was sent around to the colleges on the day of the event, and there might have been a feeble announcement in the economics classes.

Even the administration, who recognizes the student enough to send him Semi-centennial invitations, has neglected to send the colleges the weekly newsletter of campus events for posting. There is more communication between the colleges and our off-campus members than exists between the Rice professors-Lovett Hall group (whose names will forever be written in red tape) and the Rice student body.

NOW, IN REFERENCE to Mr. Kelly’s remark on the “grading system” and Dr. Rimlinger’s reference to “work load”; the Rice work load is heavy and it is often likened to “trying to get a drink of water from a fire hose.” I contend that many of the offered courses could and should be aimed more towards our “intellectual curiosity” rather than retaining their force-fed-facts characteristics.

Most of us would count as our best courses those where there was directed outside reading, research, and assignments geared to stimulate curiosity even further. The usual result of this type of a course is a better grade with time spent in a more self-satisfactory way.
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fying way. This reflects the truth that "you get out of educa-
tion what you put into it." This statement is obvious, but someone
or something must provide the initial stimulus, the catalyst for
the reaction.

THE RESPONSIBILITY of the student is another thing. He
must, of course, respond to the stimulus. If he doesn't, the reac-
tion won't be carried through and the truth of Dr. Rimlinger's
words rings in our ears. Laziness and apathy, while they fit well
in editorials and sermons, cannot be used as excuses by the stu-
dents themselves.

Just as professors should en-
courage the student, so must the
colleges and its membership make
their efforts. All of the colleges
have upperclassmen called Fel-

ows, Mentors, etc., who were
selected to work with the freshmen
and to provide service to the col-
ge. Their services should not
stop with helping freshmen pass
math or with "fixing up" a soph-
omore with his steady's little sis-
ter. They should extend themselves
to directing college members to-
wars the obvious opportunities
available or even, as some have
done, promote their own pro-
grams.

THERE IS a definite need for
greater cooperation between the
colleges themselves and the vari-
cous campus organizations. Don't
get me wrong, I think competition
is wonderful, stimulating. Look at
Russia and the U.S., France and
Engeland, Jaffe and Harlan, for ex-
amples. Two weeks
ago, January 31, points out an
unusual, but real, occurrence:

gatherings of various types were
taking place on campus the same
night at approximately the same
time.

A remedy to this confusion
could be effected if all organiza-
tions and colleges would regis-
ter their events with the Dean
of Students' office no matter
what the event or whether they
are required to do so. This would
provide a means for coordination
and organized planning. This may
be asking too much, though.

LASTLY, THESE same organi-
zations might consider the qual-
ity of their programs and the sub-
jects presented. Controversy,
of course, always draws an inter-
ested crowd. Advertising is an-
other area of effectiveness which
has been essentially untapped.
Announcements in the colleges
are nice and all that, but compet-
ing events are unfortunately
played down if announced at all.

Intellectual curiosity is still, in
the end, an individual thing; but
encouragement (and enforced col-
ge nights and programs, while
they provide a large and seem-
ingly polite audience, are not en-
couragement) from many and dif-
ferent sources—is necessary to
provide and promote this curios-
ity. Now that all of the contend-
ing forces have blamed each
other, why don't we do something
about it?