Harvard Professor Views Rice, Calls Students 'Alert, Interesting'

By RICHARD BEST

For the past semester, Amos N. Wilder has been Visiting Professor of Religion at Rice. In his two courses, the Harvard divine has found Rice students to be "alert, bright, and interesting to teach." As he had not taught undergraduate for thirty years, Wilder finds himself enjoying his work with students not specializing in theology.

WHEN ASKED if he found students here to be more grade-conscious than at Harvard, Wilder recalled with a smile that at every university there are three complaints inevitably made, viz., poor food, over-emphasis on grading, and reservation of the best professors for graduate students.

Wilder (a brother of playwright Thornton) appreciates the fact that a closer faculty-student relationship is possible at a small school than at institutions such as the University of California and Harvard. There professors find it difficult to refuse requests to serve on educational committees and in the Administration. "With the establishment of the space program, a trend of this type might become apparent at Rice," Wilder noted.

IN REPLY to a query concerning the influence of the university on its surrounding community, Wilder stated that he sees plenty of responsible courage demonstrated in the South. Idealism is found everywhere. "Northern faculties find it easy to speak out on the race issue, but they are not up against it."

Whereas the first business of the teacher is to teach, a school has a responsibility to the community in which it is located. "If, in a faculty, no one is involved in local problems — that raises a definite question mark."

WILDER RECALLED the activities of students at Phillips Brooks House at Harvard and Dwight Hall at Yale, centers of student concern with religious and social issues.

The religious situation at Harvard expectedly differs somewhat from that at Rice. There, Sunday and daily worship services bring together students and faculty which are not interested in joining parish churches. The several denominational groups have pooled their resources in the Student Christian Movement.

DR. AMOS WILDER
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