THE CLASSES IN CRISIS

Do Classes Have Role? Presidents Give Pros And Cons

By CLARK CHAMBERLAIN

Do classes at Rice serve a purpose? The Thresher, in view of the pressure drive to abolish classes, asked the present class presidents to analyze the class system and attempt, if they wished, to defend it.

Jim Campbell is president of the senior class. Charlie Myers is president of the freshman class.

Jim Campbell: "Electoral to class office at Rice is somewhat akin to being chosen for membership in an honorary fraternity. I think that there are few class officers, past or present, who would deny that the office per se is an important part of their record here. In most cases (the senior class being the notable exception) the duties are light, and their performance requires attention on only one or two occasions during the year.

"The services which class government performs (Freshman Handbook, Parent Orientation Day, etc.) could be handled by, say, committees of the SA. But why should they be? The classes carry out these functions fairly efficiently, and offer a certain amount of honor besides. For these two reasons I see no current need to abolish class government."

Charlie Myers: "When a Freshman arrives at Rice he is introduced to a college, not a class. After an initial period of freshman guidance the colleges try to make the new student feel completely a part of his college and stress his position within the college rather than his class. Few Freshmen put their class over their college.

"Most universities have a class division in order to carry out social functions and implement representation in their Student Congress. Under a college system this division is not necessary since student government and activities are carried out on an individual college basis. Some things are done in an all-school senate, which is organized on a 'union of colleges' basis.

"The purpose of this senate is to carry out functions which benefit all of the colleges, giving them a united voice in issues with the administration or other universities. When the new Student Senate was formed, it was decided that it should consist of representatives from each college, rather than each class. The class organizations are mere holders of tradition from the 'old Rice' before 1957."

"Pragmatically speaking, there is not even an excuse of tradition to maintain the classes. Their only common major responsibility is to plan and execute one party per year, a responsibility which could be more easily incorporated into the Social Committee of the SA."

"If the classes are abolished, as I'm sure will be attempted next year, provisions should be made for the election of a Freshman Representative to the Student Senate and the creation of a Senior Committee, to plan activities connected with graduation. By adopting these changes not only will a financial dead-weight be removed from the SA but another step will be taken towards creating a full-time college system at Rice."

Both letters have touched on the main argument both for and against classes: their functional value. Rice lacks no multitude of agencies to give parties, print handbooks, or orient bewildered parents. In fact, these functions are of such a nature as would fit them more to the SA and the colleges than to a collection of people who merely share a year of birthdays.

Another main difference between the approaches taken is that of sentimentality vs. pragmatism. We can forgive Mr. Campbell his nostalgia; but Mr. Myers' proposals smack of a realistic approach to the clash between classes and practically every other organization on campus, especially the colleges.

Let us hope that the Constitutional Referendum on classes promised by Myers vindicates the colleges and does away with the greatest throwbacks to the Dark Ages that exist on campus.