
Dr. Herbert H. Lehnert writes the sixth article in the Faculty Sound-Off series. An assistant professor of German, Dr. Lehnert received his Ph.D. from Christian Albrechts Universitaet in Europe.—Ed.

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While the position of religion at Rice is somewhat in doubt (it is by no means under discussion, though), there can be no doubt as to the official religion which dominates this place.

It is the worship of a god which is called “The Image of Rice.”

We all are worshipping him, more or less.

He can be classified as a primitive ethnical god: his exact nature is unknown, he strikes from the dark, he wants and receives human sacrifices, but, fortunately, his power is limited locally.

He is a moody god. If nothing moves, he stays relatively quiet. Sometimes he is satisfied with having the activities of student organizations limited, but occasionally, he wants a student or perhaps a faculty member.

TO BE SURE, he never is fed completely innocent people, but that should not lure you into a false sense of security; who on this earth is completely innocent?

Moreover, do not think that God “Image of Rice” is irritated by a lack of morality. The concept of morality is replaced by that of publicity.

The method how God “Image of Rice” is awakened is not exactly known to this writer. Here is what he could find out from hearsay: There are some people who gain a really great sense of satisfaction by becoming indignant about something. This indignation is usually translated into letter-writing.

Of course, such a letter serves the purpose of satisfying the writer much more if he knows there is at least some prospect of his letter being taken seriously.

To be sure, because of the innate intelligence of administration officials, by far not all letters sent to our administration and stemming from indignation can be expected to be taken seriously.

(At this point, this writer wants to remind the reader again, that he has no insight in the machinery of the administration. He only happens to have received some training in arriving at a conclusion from indications.)

However, some letters, some publicity, seem to be taken seriously. Perhaps they have to be.

The reason for this is money.

It is obvious that Rice is using a good deal of money. Even if some unnecessary marble from Rayzor Hall would have been omitted and if the apparent annual increase in the force of yard-men were relaxed temporarily, there still would be a great need of dollars.

Rice can not stop its expansion program if it wants to remain a university of high standing (I do not argue with people who would wish “remain” in the previous sentence to be replaced by “become”).

MONEY CAN ONLY come from donors. Who knows whether one of these letterwriters, who is obviously concerned about us, may be a prospective donor?

This seems to be one of the most important reasons why the god is being fed occasionally, in fact, this is his raison d’etre as a god.

But, perhaps, there is a possibility that we should have more faith in the good sense of rich businessmen? Perhaps they would really want to donate to a great university where the spirit of liberty prevails? Perhaps the really generous donors of the future would be rejected by a spirit of provincial narrow-mindedness among students and faculty?

Perhaps these future donors know or have heard that learning and gaining of knowledge in the full sense of the tradition of our free world is only achieved in an atmosphere of freedom, and a sense of security in students and faculty?

Perhaps these ideas are disposed of as dreams. But one thing I know. As long as Image of Rice remains a god, he stands in the way of Rice’s respectability as a great university.