FACULTY SOUND-OFF

Small Voice From The End Zone

Dr. Ben Josephson of the Department of Physics at Rice, joined the faculty two years ago. He received his doctorate from M.I.T.—Ed.

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The principal function of a university in a society is to provide for the higher education of its members. Although higher education if frequently implemented with magnificent disregard for inequities in the distribution of native ability among the populace, we have, in our society, a small group of private universities which claim a special role: they provide unusual educational opportunities for the exceptionally able student.

These universities are discriminating in their choice of students, require high standards of performance, and attempt to provide an invigorating intellectual atmosphere which stimulates and emphasizes creative thinking.

NONE OF THESE institutions neglect the social or physical development of their students. In particular, all provide facilities for sports and encourage student participation in them. Such a program directly benefits the student.

In the case of our university, however, I wonder whether all the trappings of big-league college football—immense stadium, elaborate facilities, large coaching staff, special admissions policies for athletes, intensive athletic recruiting—are of any benefit to that part of the Rice student body that comes here to obtain what Rice really exists to offer: a better education than can be obtained elsewhere.

IF THE EXISTENCE of big-time college football cannot (Continued on Page 10)
be shown to further the avowed educational purposes of Rice or to benefit (in proportion to the effort) the Rice student body, then I believe that it should be discontinued and a suitable intramural or intercollegiate program, confined to the regular students at Rice, substituted.

I have frequently heard the argument that football on the grand scale does benefit the students by acting as a kind of focus for school spirit and providing an organization in which the student body can take pride. I think that the students would take as much pride in a team selected from their own ranks (whomever they played).

FURTHERMORE, I would prefer to see student espirit de corps arise from pride in the intellectual standing and educational excellence arise from pride in the intellectual standing and educational excellence of their university as it does at institutions such as Amherst, Swarthmore, Johns Hopkins, Oberlin and Reed.

I have also been told that many men admitted via the athletic program become leaders on campus and take academic degrees successfully. If so, then surely such men could qualify for admission under normal procedures.

After all, I have no quarrel with the student who wants to play football. I only question the appropriateness of a system which permits athletes to pretend to be students at an elite university.

OF CONSIDERABLE importance are the alumni and influential persons who want big-time college football at Rice for their own reasons. I do not know these reasons and I can not argue with them, but I question whether this group is doing Rice a service in her quest for excellence in research and education. Many universities have "de-emphasized football and their alumni and friends have