All-School Government In A College System

By BOB CLARKE

What is the rationale of an all-school student government in a college system? In writing for this special issue I should like to discuss briefly the development of the present Senate structure and comment on some of its functions and spheres of operation.

Before 1959, the Student Council, as the all-school government was called, was composed of class representatives. After the establishment of the colleges, two years of operation under this old structure proved that it was inadequate if the college governments were to be placed in the proper perspective.

ESSENTIALLY, the present Senate is an Inter-College Council. Its only representatives not elected directly from the colleges are the five executive committee members and the freshman class president.

The impetus for this reorganization came from the leadership in the new colleges who felt that there were many functions which a college acting only in its own behalf could not perform adequately. This leadership also saw the need for presenting to the Administration and to the outside community a unified, representative position.

THIS NEED IS still present today. For example, student government at Rice is expected to and does occupy a position of some influence in the student associations of Texas and of the Nation. It would be difficult and impractical indeed, for one of the colleges individually to hold a membership in NSA, TISA, or even an organization such as a proposed Southwest Conference Student Association.

UNITY IS needed also as student government attempts to involve itself in University policy decisions. Projects such as the course evaluation conducted by the Senate Committee on Educational Policy strive to present to the Administration the opinions of the student body of the present curriculum and to gather together all recommendations for change. This is not to say that the colleges should not involve themselves in this activity. On the contrary, they are encouraged to discuss topics such as this and also to make recommendations, but their suggestions are perhaps more effective if combined with the report from the SCEP and presented as a single, well-organized plan.

THE CURRICULUM is only one example of how the all-school government working with the colleges can accomplish more effectively those projects involving the entire student body. Problems of general student welfare such as library hours and the Food Service have greater possibility of being solved if they are considered and presented as concerns of the entire student body rather than of a single college. Student involvement in the operation of the Memorial Center must come from an all-school body. Even regulation of student organizations, if there is to be student regulation, must come from a University-wide organization.

The position of the Senate is clear. There is no need for concern that the Senate is taking away authority from the colleges, because the Senate is the colleges working together. No action can possibly be taken by the Senate if it does not have the support of the colleges. As long as this relationship is recognized the actions of the college governments and those of the Senate will be mutually beneficial.