HANSZEN PRESIDENT

Small Problems Reveal
The More Basic Ones

By DAVID TILSON

A topic that has provoked some thoughtful discussion of late is that of attendance at college nights. The problem is that on college nights not infrequently does a large contingent of the membership get up and leave after the meal before the guest speaks.

This exodus not only embarrasses the master, the officers, and the program chairman; but also those members of the college who take pride in the college's appearance.

WITH REGARD to this problem, there are many possible points of view. The first is that any speaker knows that what he will have to say will not be of interest to everyone in a group so heterogeneous as a college. Therefore he would certainly not be offended if some people left.

There is much cogency in this position, but I hardly think that when the exodus becomes appreciable, it will do to maintain that there is really no problem at all.

A second proposal is that the college night be announced in advance to all the colleges, and that members who do not care to attend be allowed to eat in another college while members in other colleges who are interested in the announced topic be allowed to exchange.

THE EXCEPTION of such an exchange program would, however, involve a rather complicated machinery of communication. It would obviously break down if there were more people desiring to skip the college night than available replacements from other colleges.

A similar proposal is that members who are unable to attend the college night sign up in advance with the headwaiter and eat in another college or eat early in the training table room. But due to the overcrowded conditions of all the colleges, there is obviously insufficient room for one college to feed members of another (when some colleges do not even have room to have a full-scale Associate night). There are other objections to the training room proposal.

A SUGGESTION which strikes me as possibly the most satisfactory is that the college simply ask its members to eat off campus in case they do not desire to stay for the speech. This is hardly an unreasonable request in view of the fact that there are only about three college nights in an entire semester and that a college member would not be likely to be studying for an exam on the night of all three occasions.

Moreover, if the college night were to be adjourned at some specific time (say 7:15) and if care were taken to schedule only really first-rate speakers for college nights, there would seem to be little room for complaint.

ANOTHER SUGGESTION is that college night be given up entirely. After dinner, let everyone get up from the table and go to the lounge for a cigarette or

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talk. Then at some specific time, say 7:00, those who were interested in the speaker might return to the dining area where a number of chairs had been set up before the lecture. Thus, those who could not stay might slip out unobtrusively.

There is some varying degree of merit in each of the above proposals, and each recommendation should be thoroughly explored before any decision is made. It seems to me, however, that a great deal more than simply the college night is at stake. Whatever solution is adopted, some basic pre-supposition will be made regarding the relationship of an individual with his college.

Does a college have the right to require anything of an individual in return for not only providing him with a place to live convenient to classrooms but also offering him a variety of extracurricular activities such as intramural sports, chorus, newsletter publication, and recreation facilities?

How can a college cultivate a sense of responsibility in its members so that departures after dinner before a college night speaker will no longer be a problem? The relationship of a member to his college needs, I think, basic clarification.

Those are questions for which there are no easy answers or gimmick solutions.

Moreover, these questions are presenting themselves to us with increased urgency. For example, Dr. Fulton's committee must reach some preliminary conclusion as to whether the university even owes campus housing to all students at Rice who wish to be close to classes.

We should recognize the basic situation to be a matter of vast complexity underlying some of its rather trivial manifestations—a problem which we should face squarely and for which we should attempt to find a real answer.