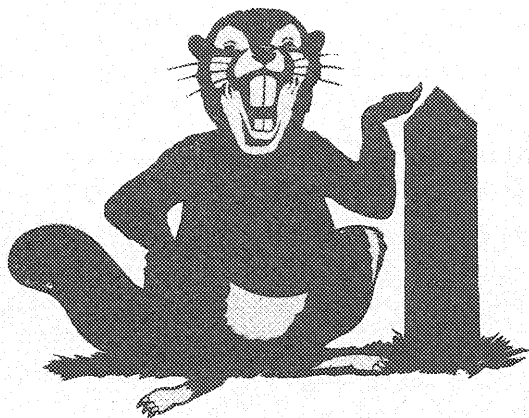


THE BEAVER



Some Notes on Student Life

THE SECOND TERM was quite obviously the worst term, the Beaver decided, laying his pencil sadly on the desk. He had been working diligently through the derivation of an equation and had suddenly realized that the next step would reduce it irrevocably to $1 = 1$, a fact which he felt hardly needed all this mathematics to prove. In the first or third terms he would have gone back over it at once. Now he only sat back and lit a cigarette. The second term was too far from September to be new and interesting, and too far from June to be almost over. Pajamarinos and callow Frosh and the Interhouse were past. Spring beach parties and graduation were in the future. But nothing seemed to be happening right now.

Electioneering

OF COURSE, elections were coming up shortly. Campus stump-statesmen were assuming busy, cigar-chewing airs and potential candidates were dark and secretive, giving back blank looks or cagey shrugs when asked if they were running for office. But very soon there would be the nominations assembly and they would look a little surprised when nominated, as though Popular Demand had walked into their rooms one night and twisted their arms. Then posters would spring up like dragon seed along the olive walk and a brief excitement would hang over the campus.

But, while the average Techman found all the electioneering interesting or amusing to some degree, he seldom did more than listen and vote. The Beaver felt it was a poor situation to leave the whole field of student government to a small group of a more energetic or exhibitionist nature, but he perennially wondered what could be done about it. That strangely universal malady, I-Haven't-Got-The-Time, was probably no idle excuse.

The Beaver himself knew *he* wouldn't want to step into Ralph Lovberg's shoes, or keep John Fee's rather recondite finance books, or even chew his already negligible fingernails promoting Bill Freed's ASCIT dances

or Bert Snider's rallies and assemblies. Still he realized that he wasn't doing much just sitting here and filling paper with $1 = 1$. Maybe there was a job . . . He fumbled for his *Little T* and opened it to the Honor Point list, while his roommate eyed him suspiciously. His roommate was a very pure scientist and looked askance at political ambitions.

New Criteria

SOMETHING SEEMS on the verge of happening to the eternal campus problem of good instruction. In January, a seven-student committee headed by Prexy Lovberg was asked to present to the faculty the student complaints on graduate instruction and to withhold no fangs.

An atmosphere of lethargy had long enshrouded discussion of teaching-improvement schemes. The students felt the existence of an attitude among some of the faculty that all such schemes had long ago been considered and rejected as impracticable. But the students also felt strongly that any working program—even experimental—was better than empty discussion without action.

The thesis the committee presented was that teaching was not accomplished by placing an outstanding research mind in close contact with an undergraduate mind and expecting ideas to flow between them by osmosis; teaching should rather be an active communication, requiring three essential qualities in the teacher—knowledge of his subject, interest in teaching, and ability to present material to a class lucidly and with maximum efficiency.

Armed with this threefold watchword the students appeared before an excellently-attended faculty meeting in the Athenaeum with a concrete program mapped out, chiefly for the improvement of instruction by graduate students. They asked first that graduate grants be divided into two sections—teaching fellowships for those responsible for actual instruction, and graduate assistantships for all others on grants, with a higher stipend and prestige value for the former. Then they asked for an effective screening process—to consist of interviews, questionnaires, letters of recommendation, and psychological aptitude tests, all concerned with a man's teaching interest and potential ability—with the purpose of giving teaching fellowships in each case to the most qualified.

To improve existing instruction the committee recommended finding a man who could give an effective course in class mechanics, speech, class psychology, and the practical aspects of teaching—a course which it would be required that all teaching fellows attend and pass successfully in order to hold their fellowships. Finally, to evaluate a man's teaching, the committee drew upon its Army experience of the Inspector General system and recommended that each department head spend about half an hour each team with every class in his department, in the absence of the instructor, to learn from his students an instructor's teaching qualities.

Here was no ordinary airing of undergraduate gripes but a practical, constructive program, and Lovberg's committee was invited to return to work it out further. The Beaver on campus was perhaps a little surprised at the sympathetic faculty reaction but was highly pleased with the ideas presented. Although many of his friends were skeptical, he ardently hoped that *this* time action would be taken and the program put into effect, even if only to try it out. He felt that, as a customer in this knowledge emporium where he paid out \$600 yearly from a thin purse, he was entitled to this consideration.

—Jim Hendrickson '50