

EDITORIAL PAGE

Who Are The Independents?

The Nebraskan last week published a Letter from a member of a University co-op— an "independent," according to the writer.

The letter asked four questions, two of which implied that the writer felt that independents were being discriminated against in campus activities.

The Nebraskan checked the facts in each of the four cases and discovered that the answers to his questions were perfectly logical and reflected no discrimination.

The letter also stated: "There ARE some independents attending this University . . . We just want to exist on this campus without fair share of participation in campus activities."

This statement raises a number of fundamental questions:

- 1. What are independents?
2. In what activities are independents forbidden to participate?
3. Why are independents so rare in other, non-forbidden activities?
4. Are members of co-op houses justified in calling themselves independents?

To answer the first question is also to answer the second. Theoretically, an independent is a non-Greek. But this classification means nothing. Actually, an independent is a student who belongs to no 24-hour-a-day organization. He owes his allegiance to no group.

Because he is a member of no organized house, he is automatically eliminated from participating in a score or more of campus activities which are necessarily based on organized houses. Among these are UMOC competition, Kosmet Klub fall show, Homecoming displays and house social functions.

The third question is more difficult to answer. Although the number of independents which participate in campus activities is small, their mere existence proves that independents are not outlawed from these activities.

One answer perhaps lies in the inability of independents to organize themselves into some type of potent political or social organization on campus. While BABW has succeeded, independent men and women have failed utterly in efforts to organize an Independent Student Association and to make a good showing in campus-wide elections.

Another answer is that, for the most part, independents appear uninterested in participating in non-scholastic campus activities. They frequently assume an attitude of indifference, or even superiority, toward activities.

Perhaps a refusal to associate with Greeks prevents some independents from taking part in activities in which fraternities men participate. This refusal may be based on the belief that fraternities monopolize activities in order to keep independents out.

But the existence of independents in activities—in the Innocents Society and Mortar Board—proves that non-Greeks can become active in campus affairs, if they wish.

The answer to the fourth question may have begun to appear in the answers to previous questions.

Actually, organized houses of non-Greeks,

including co-ops, have more in common with fraternities than they have with independents. Co-ops, like fraternities, are eligible to participate in hour dances and other social functions, nomination of Eligible Bachelors and the many other house activities denied to true independents.

There is no mysterious wall between a Greek fraternity and any other organized house such as a co-op. Except for a national organization, secret ritual and rush week, there is no substantial difference between the two.

When co-ops associate themselves with unorganized independents and describe themselves as non-Greek (their only common bond), they are simply diminishing the opportunities for cooperation between Greek and organized non-Greek.

Only when co-ops recognize the similarity in form and purpose of these two groups will they actually do what the letter-writer described as "our part to advance fraternal relations."

If co-ops continue to fight the battle for unorganized independents, they can never assume their "fair share of participation in campus activities."

Independents are not interested in organizations and, to a large extent, in campus activities. If they were, most of them would not be independents.—K.R.

Twisted Logic

The Omaha World-Herald concerned itself with "The Test of Freedom" in an editorial Sunday.

It quoted a statement by a Columbia University professor to the effect, "Freedom is where you can get out if you want to. Freedom is where, if you don't like it, you are at liberty to go away. This is your key test—the right to quit."

The professor was referring to what freedom meant to one under the heel of Communist domination.

Few people would deny that, for the oppressed peoples behind the Iron Curtain, this would be a valid definition of freedom.

But the World-Herald blandly extended the professor's remarks to imply that this is the test of freedom to those living in a free nation.

It said, "There are worse evils than economic inequality or discrimination because of race, religion or social prejudice. If they get too bad any individual can remedy them for himself by moving away. But the greatest evil is slavery and slavery is the denial to move away."

The World-Herald statement is an example of attempting to put into black and white something which has many gradations.

The right to move away is a dubious one; it implies that if you do not conform to what someone (presumably the majority) expects and demands, there is no alternative of co-existing as a minority.

A democracy, as The Nebraskan understands it, is composed of minorities by definition. If no minorities exist, or are allowed to exist, you do not have a democracy, but a totalitarian form of government.

The World-Herald observation is a dangerous one because it implies the right of the majority (or those setting "standards") to insist upon either conformance or "the right" to get out. Is this any different from slavery?

When one is denied the right to live within the laws of the land according to his own conscience under pain of "the right" to quit, can this be freedom?

The World-Herald, it is hoped, cannot seriously advocate this sort of "freedom," which is precisely the same kind imposed behind the Iron Curtain.—E.D.

Educational Trend?

An exchange student from Germany had some strange words to describe trends in European education.

In an interview reported in Tuesday's Nebraskan, Hans Steffen first pointed to fundamental differences in high schools and universities of the two continents. The main differences, he said, are that European universities are more advanced, that they have fewer restrictions and that students in European universities are older and more mature than in American schools.

These principles are usually accepted as primary differences between American and European educational systems.

Steffen pointed to a new trend in German education, however, which might reduce these differences. He said that Germany is moving toward a new type of education similar to the progressive education in this country.

If the new type of teaching, as Steffen said, is intended to "give children the opportunity for independent thinking," the trend appears healthy.

But if the new progressive education means lowering German university students to conform to American levels, the influence of our educational system must be condemned.—K.R.

The Case Against John Dewey...

EDITOR'S NOTE: The following is the second of two articles presenting opposite views of the principles of John Dewey, father of progressive education. Both articles are from the Des Moines Sunday Register. Today's article was written by Albert Lynd, Boston businessman, who had seven years of teaching experience at Harvard College and Stanford University.

European domination of American educational theory ended with the 19th century, when John Dewey published "The School and Society."

For most of the last half-century the "philosopher of science and freedom" was the strongest influence upon the New Education in America.

I respect Dewey's genius and his rugged intellectual integrity. His prose is not fluent, but it has a powerful effect even upon a layman without philosophical pretensions.

No matter how far you are from agreement with him, you must admire his systematic pummeling of every trace of what he finds amiss in time-honored systems of ideas.

If some of these ideas happen to be those which you believe important, the experience is like watching someone bludgeon your grandmother, while proving to you that she clearly deserves it.

The most important question here is not whether Dewey's views of the nature of man and the universe are right or wrong. That is as you please.

The question is: How many parents would agree that his ideas, if they understood them, are those which should determine the formation of their children?

And how many communities, if consulted, would be likely to approve a philosophy which is plainly uncongenial to certain loyalties which most plain, unphilosophizing people hold to be important: belief in super-naturalism, in a transcendent natural law, in the immutability of certain moral principles?

Dewey's great influence upon American education is usually explained by his disciples on the ground that his philosophy is peculiarly congenial to the spirit of American democracy.

His authority is more probably explainable as a historical accident: he was the only first-rate American philosopher to take an intense, evangelical interest in the lower schools.

For our graduates in education who are uneducated in anything but their own trade, Dewey is to the American school what Aristotle was to the medieval school—simply "The Philosopher."

His name is used as a charm within the profession and an exorcism without. This is an interesting fate for the century's most consistent foe of dogmatism.

Dewey's educational theories

are consistently related to his basic philosophical views.

His philosophy is usually called instrumentalism. The implication is that knowledge is not merely that descriptive information acquired by the viewer of a scene. Rather it is something which is begotten and exercised in action and which is an instrument for more intelligent action.

Other points which are prominent in Dewey's thought—

There are no eternal truths. Man is wholly a biological organism. The mind does not learn or know as a spectator; rather knowledge results from the interaction of a human organism with the environment.

The only test for truth in an idea, therefore, is in its consequences in the life activities to which it leads. The only way of intelligently testing and controlling these consequences is through the method of experimental science.

Truth is always relative, because the consequences of an idea may change with time or place. Since the environment is in constant change, the consequences of any activity involved with it are subject to change.

The search for knowledge must be continuous and arduous, but it is not an aspiration toward any "ultimate reality" in the universe. It is a search for principles which will "work" here and now, in a changing situation.

There is no mind or "soul" in the traditional sense. This, if anything, is the key doctrine of Deweyism.

Most previous philosophy, Dewey believed, has been infected by a double error of the Greeks: that there is some perfect or "ultimate" reality in the universe, and that it is discoverable by the use of a special intellectual faculty.

Dewey finds no evidence in man of a nonmaterial faculty which thinks, or can be filled up with knowledge like a sponge.

Man is an organism engaged in an instinctive effort to adapt itself to the environment.

Mr. Dewey's view of the mind is critically important in his education views. The process of learning, for him, is not the accumulating of a mental stock of information.

It is the acquisition of the organization of certain habits. Children are not born with minds. They acquire habits, including those of thought, which are not different in mode or origin from other habits.

Since there is no mind or thought apart from environmental interaction, it follows that there is no such thing as a soul or even a "self" which can exist and be educated apart from its own experiences.

There are no fixed moral laws. For centuries, Dewey believes, men wasted energy and con-

strued themselves by efforts to find in religion and philosophy a set of immutable moral truths to which human nature should be made to conform.

In most of the older religious traditions human nature was viewed with suspicion and subjected to efforts to make it behave properly within relation to some ideal.

Dewey insists that human nature itself is the only source of workable moral guides.

Human happiness is the consistent aim of Dewey's moral theory, as he does not believe there is an future existence in which the sorrows and inequities of this life may be redressed.

Democracy is a moral value because it is the social order which encourages each individual to make the most effective use of his powers for living with maximum satisfaction, or in the scientific view, to achieve the most successful relationship of the organism to its environment.

Pragmatism justifies progressive education. Dewey's basic philosophical assumptions are more than well fitted to his rejection of the traditional distinction of mind and body is an indispensable assumption.

Progressivism is logically consistent with instrumentalist philosophy right down the line. If there are no absolutes in the history of ideas, it is of course quite sensible to throw out of our schools much of the lore of the past.

A school program related to the view of man as a monistic biological organism should involve the student in lively activities around the solution of problems of living which most clearly beset him.

In Dewey's view, the habits of

most of us now were forced upon us during infancy and childhood when we were physically dependent upon adults. They are our elders' habits.

Intelligent management of the habit and impulse patterns in youth is the rationale of progressive education. It explains those classroom practices with which most parents are familiar, including those practices which have provoked caricature.

Agreement with the basic philosophy of Mr. Dewey is the logical price of agreement with his educational theories.

Precisely because progressive education dispenses so far with tradition and stakes so much upon the educational creativity of the teacher, it is a method which would require someone like a Dewey in every classroom for intelligent execution.

In actuality, by the testimony of their own vivid utterances, the typical graduates in education today are the least fitted group in the community to assume the responsibility for re-creating its cultural aspirations.

Mr. Dewey's interpreters engage in a forthright effort to enlighten the adults of my town and others on the blessings of instrumentalism.

But it is not their right, in the meantime, to slip into the schools of the community a philosophy of education, which if understood, would be rejected by the great majority of the people to whom the schools belong.

Even those who take satisfaction in the enormous influence of John Dewey sometimes admit that his philosophy has not been very clearly comprehended.

You know your neighbors. How many of them would vote for Deweyism if they understood the philosophical ballot?

The Student Speaking

Hey, Arready

By JERRY SHARPNACK

It has been suggested that in last week's column I overstepped the sacred bounds of human decency by implying that the knocking about of old ladies is funny. Funny? It's hilarious.

The whole idea of last week's story came to me while I was chopping the paws off a three-week-old puppy. The very thought of poor grandma getting shoved around was so funny I had to stop at two paws and go inside my spider-infested room and write up the story.

I cleared my desk of the works of Jonathan Swift (whose style I have been copying) and began to write vehemently. I hesitated in my typing only long enough to burn some Bibles I had stolen from an orphanage.

Being quite exhausted after the story's completion, I felt the need for nourishment. Two babies were baking in the oven, but would not be done for another hour. I had to be content with small spiders until the main course was ready.

I was bouncing about on my chair with mouth-watering impatience at the thought of those baked babies. They were twins.

Has this little tale shocked you? Has it demoralized you? Corroded your thinking? No, I think not. I also think nothing so ridiculous would ever corrupt any adult-minded person's attitude on life, nor change his philosophy.

Whether it symbolizes something else in the form of a satire or not, it could hardly be

construed to have a literal meaning.

In regard to last week's "Grandma" column, I did intend some symbolism, however ineptly it may have been realized.

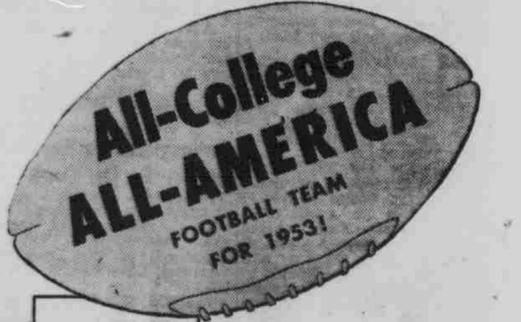
I am thoroughly disgusted and completely bored with any type of over-sentimentality and super-virtuous living. I am tired of seeing virtuous women continually get the fella as I invariably have in every movie I have ever seen. Goody-goodyes have also ruined a great many otherwise substantial books and stories; and if there's anything I hate, it's a goody-goody.

As far as elderly people are concerned, I have no more nor no less respect for them than anyone else. I judge a person by his ability and his ideals, not his age. Last week's piece was not meant as a dig at our elders, but as a sort of semisatire directed at sentimentality. Mostly it was just a story.

Any piece of writing should be read critically, and first impressions may not be correct. Who knows, next week I may advocate infanticide, which is not a bad idea at that.

I hate guys Who criticize And minimize The other guys Whose enterprise Has made them rise Above the guys Who criticize.

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Margin Notes

Weather Or Not... Investigate!

Taking his cue from examples set by Congressional investigators, the Chief of the United States Weather Bureau ordered a probe to find out why Government forecasters were fooled by Friday's surprise snowstorm.

The bureau, which usually runs up an 80 to 90 per cent accuracy average in the long run, will now have to watch its step.

Looking into the future and coming up with the wrong answer is likely to be a punishable offense.

Passing Of A Monarch

Remember when King Farouk was kicked out—and the secrets of his private chambers were revealed? A fabulous story, with pictures of nudes, cheap sex books and bits of women's clothing.

Already reporters are attempting to create the same interest in the personal affairs of late King Ibn Saud of Saudi Arabia. A news story two days after the king's death quoted a congresswoman on the details of Ibn Saud's harem.

Big Business Of Football

Opponents of big-time college football will have a hard time proving that the pigskin game has become a giant business.

The U.S. Supreme Court is against them. In a Monday decision the Court ruled that professional baseball is still only a sport and hence not subject to federal anti-trust laws.

If the ruling applies to professional baseball, it should include "professional" college football.

The Nebraskan

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