

The Credibility Gap; Or A New Domestic Propaganda

Recently at a banquet for the Georgia College Press, a prominent senior editor of United Press International made several after dinner remarks spiced with the usual jokes that are appropriate on those occasions. He said that the Washington D. C. bureau reporters for major syndicates and press services have developed a way to tell if L. B. J. is lying. They say if he puts his hand on your shoulder and rubs it lightly, he is not lying; if he pulls his ear lobe downward with his thumb and index finger, he isn't lying; if he peers seriously over his glasses he is not lying; but, if you see his lips move, then he's lying.

Well as humorous as this is it just shows the feelings of the press and consequently the public over the much discussed credibility gap of the present administration. We have gone through the prospect of victory in Viet Nam several months ago to the present sorry state of affairs today in that tiny peninsula. And now the American public is watching a uniquely American phenomenon in the Fulbright bird-dogging over the Tonkin Gulf incident in 1964. If the result of this great phantom chase ends in validating Fulbright's suspicions then we will probably witness a revolt of the Fourth Estate that will make the debate over F. D. R.'s actions around Pearl Harbor look like a business meeting of a garden club.

The problem is, where is the end of credibility and the beginning of specially constructed domestic propaganda?

Just last week a member of The Reporter's staff in Viet Nam told one of the Saigon news briefings from the military officials there. It seems that the Army Major in charge of the briefing stated categorically that all N.L.F. snipers had been cleared from the downtown Saigon district. But, the writer of The Reporter article says that at that moment a lonely sniper opened up on the very same building that the briefing was being given in. The effect was obvious: All the snipers were not clear of the downtown district, but the Major continued insisting that the area was clear as the slugs thudded quite disrespectfully into the side of the building and surrounding objects.

The question does not seem to be whether we are justified in being in Viet Nam but rather whether we will ever be privy to any truth concerning our involvement there. No wonder there are hawks and doves, no wonder there is a credibility gap but more pitiful than all the debate is the fact that no one except the high-ranking few even know what is fact and what is fiction. The great tragedy will be when the propagandists begin to believe their own propaganda and it becomes too sacred for a Fulbright to question.

Vietnam - Yes; Civil rights, war on poverty, crime in the streets . . . ?

Pick up a newspaper and the first, and under most circumstances, the only headline that meets the eye concerns our present fight (or is it plight) in Vietnam. What has happened to the rest of the Great Society? Are civil rights and the war on poverty so insignificant that they can be played down in order to fight an undeclared war in Asia? I, for one, do not believe so.

Because of the war there has been serious cutbacks in funds to the Office of Economic Opportunity and the war on poverty has been dealt a serious setback. Project Headstart and Vista can not survive without finances and they stand to suffer as long as the war continues.

Detroit, Milwaukee, Harlem, Newark—it could be another long, hot summer (to the chagrin of the administration). As Governor Romney pointed out following the disorders in Detroit, "Where was the administration when we needed it?" A commission in Newark that was investigating last summer's riots

states that "law enforcement in our country is neither designed nor equipped to deal with massive unrest. Mayor Addonizio of Newark summed up their predicament by saying that "the commission offers some worthwhile ideas although most of them hinge on money, which is not available and is not likely to be."

And what about the rising crime rate? President Johnson recently uncovered his Safe Streets program which he has placed more responsibility on the local government. He further took the load off his shoulders by declaring to the local police forces, "You do not have to remember any name except Clark Ramsey Clark. He is the man to phone." (He was referring to his Attorney General). There is no time like the present to implement steps that should have been begun last year. Maybe by election time the voter will forget the President Johnson and see just the candidate Johnson. (It is an election year, you know).

SGA Prospectus

by Dave Hudson

The SGA is pleased to announce that after a successful homecoming, there is still approximately \$4,000 left in our budget and subsequently the student body can expect some additional top-flight entertainment in the spring. In addition plans are being made for an INSIGHT program in the spring on the topic of "Federal-State Relationships." Already committed to speak are Hon. Charles Welter and Mr. Eugene Patterson. Other speakers are currently being contacted.

A major project of SGA will be the Spring Elections. Qualifications will be received before Spring Break to allow candidates that time to plan their campaigns. Chapel programs on March 4 and 5 will be devoted to explaining the duties of each office and the election rules.

Another part of the Spring Elections will be voting on a new SGA Constitution. One might begin to compare our SGA with the multiple Republics of France, but it has become impossible to operate the SGA and abide by the present constitution. The only solution is to change the document.

The reasons for this change will be specifically stated in chapel on March 4 and 5 and in the Cluster articles. In addition, the Cluster will print copies of both the old and new constitutions before the voting and thereby allow each student an opportunity to judge the issue. Generally speaking, there will be no radical changes in the operation and institutions of student government, but they will be simplified

and liberated by the new Constitution. Absent from it will be a statement of student rights which has become fashionable in many student constitutions. We feel that Mercer has certain unwritten understandings about student rights much like the unwritten constitution of Britain and that they will continue to be upheld and honored without the ornament of written elaboration.

Any suggestions concerning the new Constitution should be given to any SGA member and we shall be grateful for them.

SUPPORT THE BEARS

Letters to the Editor

Dear Editor,
After reading Steve Darby's article, "Education in the Modern University," I was impelled to pen my feelings regarding your attitude toward the University System as expressed on page 2 of the Cluster, February 13.

Mercer, like most of the universities in the U. S., is basically a liberal arts college. The purpose of a liberal arts education is to expose the student to a diversity of scholastic disciplines, primarily English, history, social sciences, and some basic applied sciences. The liberal arts students should attain a firm grasp of the scientific method of analysis, a basic understanding of the more important events and trends of world history, a clear conception of at least some of the phenomena of society, and an appreciation for literature, as well as an ability to use the English language correctly. And Religion is part of going to a Baptist school.

By your phrase, "courses taken for the sole satisfaction of the university," I suppose you meant the non-electives commonly taken in the first two years. These non-electives are the very heart and marrow of the liberal arts education. One who chooses to go to a liberal arts college must take these courses to attain that liberal arts education that he decided he wanted. Indeed, the curriculum of Mercer and other liberal arts colleges is "tailor fitted"—tailor fitted to the student who wants a liberal arts education with the added attraction of partial specialization in the last two years. If he really wants that education, he will not "count pages down to zero" and be bored; rather, he will become an increasingly motivated and interested student.

But if you and the other "Students" to whom you refer do not want this kind of education, if you would rather pursue your own narrow interests, then I suppose that rather than criticize the liberal arts curriculum, you abandon it for the trade school or engineering school or whatever that you apparently prefer.

These bored students to whom you refer are not bored because of the curriculum of the university; they are bored because they have no place in the university, or at least are not yet mature enough to benefit from it. In the words of the great French philosopher, sage and wit, Milo Tremblee, "Education is for those who want it and aspire after it not for those who fancy it and dream of it, and die in ignorance."

But, Mr. Darby, before you leave Mercer for that institution with a curriculum tailor fitted to your own educational whims you might do yourself a favor and take or review one of those horrible non-electives, the basic course in English grammar, spelling and rhetoric. With better spelling and grammar you might at least be better able to express your dubious opinions convincingly.

Sincerely,
Jeff Talley



Cluster Girl

Working on her art assignment on tree tops is this week's Cluster Girl Meri Beasley. She is a freshman and her femininity was created right here in Macon.

Just Satire

by J. Garfield Goldstein

Two students were casually remarking in chapel last Friday as the speaker finished his remarks at the sound of the fifth period bell. They had read in the Murdered Clutter that since the installation of the St. Petersburg lights on campus the rape-rate had declined radically.

One of the students was a fraternity man and the other a very thin Gamma Delta Iota. It seemed very obvious that the larger and more wise frat man was psychologically persecuting the downtrodden GDI. As they discussed the diminishing rape rate, the GDI said he had heard that the Lightenin' Authority intends to import seventeen men above the age of 90 to sit on specially constructed benches (donated by a leading Georgia Baptist) and feed pigeons with corn.

The frat man, obviously irritated that any GDI should know anything new and of import, asked where the pigeons were to come from. The GDI said he has heard that the birds are being brought especially from New Orleans which seems to grow the most virulent strain of pigeon.

Asked if he did not think this was an improvement, the frat man said he felt that any addition to the campus would be refreshing but he hoped that the pigeons would all be white because they are so pretty and are cleaner than the darker varieties. Of course the GDI disagreed because he had worked in psychology lab with the dark varieties and had found them to be much more

receptive and anxious to participate.

As we filed out late to fifth period, having missed third and fourth periods listening to a stimulating talk on perfume odors given by an ex-Anabaptist from Galilee, Georgia, the GDI fell on the concave steps and broke his jaw. At this instant up rushed a high ranking Mogul and demanded that the frat man help him with the poor GDI. The frat man didn't hear the good Mogul because he had not yet removed his grey flannel ear plugs, styled by Gant.

The Mogul screamed after the frat man that he would help him with the GDI, who already limped with pain, was crawling toward a placard that read "President Johnson is a Methodist." The Mogul muttered something about liberals and that all those who are not liberals, as he is a liberal, should be exterminated.

As I walked past the Administration Building I wondered why the pigeons? And, where would the corn come from? The solution was provided me by a very logical statistician who said that all old buildings like the Ad. Building have the pigeons and if these birds are to be kept happy then they should be fed only the most succulent ears of corn which could be easily purchased from the market after the Mercer Food Services had made their purchases appropriate for the students.

Everything seemed to fit logically in place as I strolled through the Student Center past a Marine Re

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The Mercer Cluster

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