

Under Cover

By David Burr, '50

The philosophy of a number of people says that anything goes until you encounter a stumbling block. Two students were tripped by their ambition in early March and the editor gets a chance to comment on the "ends justify the means" philosophy.

Polling places for the election of members of the Student Senate were opened the first week in March. Nothing unusual about that. Similar elections have been conducted yearly since the Senate was formed.

On the evening of the first day of the election, the ballots were burned in front of the Union Building. Not counted, but burned. Something unusual about that. The burning was witnessed by campus people including members of the Student Senate. Very unusual. The burning had official sanction. The hour was a dramatic one. The torch was lit late at night.

Why were the ballots burned. Was it an act of violence? A gesture comparable to a precinct chairman stealing a ballot box—a gesture reminiscent of Hitler's era. (The Hitler reference has been made by several well-intentioned, disgusted students who did not look beyond the action.) I don't think so.

The ballots were burned to signify the worthlessness of the votes. Not all the votes. But who could tell the good from the bad. Those in charge of the burning seemed to think it was a highly effective way of getting rid of tangible proof of an unfortunate day and an unforgettable piece of petty political "promotion."

Yet some of the proof remained. Enough to trap a pair of students. Actually the students trapped themselves by their ambitions and lack of morals. They were caught stuffing the ballot boxes.

The students were clever. The student franchise to vote is determined by University issued identification cards. One of the culprits had gathered up several I. D. cards and voted her choice several times. The second student was (and is at this writing, although he has been suspended) a member of the student senate and on the elections committee.

According to material attributed to the present president of the Student Senate there is reason to presume that the stuffing idea was not revolutionary. Apparently the students had a precedent. Whether the Senate president was quoted correctly or not, the attitude of many students is that the act was not the students undoing (the pair

is to be brought before the Student Conduct Committee) but that they were caught.

I submit to you, isn't it about time we put an end to the philosophy that anything is okay until you're caught. Caught—the serious mistake, the unforgiveable sin. Why must we place a priority and premium on cunning and shrewdness? It makes me sick.

It would be easy to whitewash the antics of the two campus "wheels" by insisting they were only following a popular trend. In recent months they have had the example of corpulence through cunning in government jobs. They have only to look in their daily newspapers to find news stories telling of ballot box stuffing and ballot box stealing. In many cases the deeds pay off. Or the basketball fixes. Or any number of scandals. Oh, they had plenty of examples. (I am not trying to build the action of the two students into a national scandal. I am trying to fit it into the scheme of things.)

I think that whitewash could only cover the outer surface of their act. For it is just this type of "political action" that compounds the pollution in an otherwise polute stream. One which needs a careful filtering. One which needs no added refuse.

There are many implications to the political duo's four-handed performance. Is this the type of political experience that young people think they need to fit themselves for the future? Who taught them it was so smart to cheat? Who told them the most important thing in life was to have a winning personality? Who failed to say, "You'll win just as easily by following the rules"? Maybe not as quickly, but as easily.

Yes, I know I am putting myself in position of believing in at least a portion of the Ten Commandments. I know I am not being "smart." I know I am automatically suspect of being naive and simple. But I want to know who gave them their set of standards.

It is important that we all know. For the two are only examples of many others who will never be detected or at least not now. Quite probably there were no others involved in the election skullduggery but there are many other occasions when cheating comes in handy.

I think the answer, although it is too pat, may be that success has taken on unpleasant definitions. I think that parents too often measure their children's accomplishments by the tangibles of office holding and memberships in organizations. Friends who fail to understand success may contribute through example. The University may lend support through the stress placed on picking Big Men or Big Women on Campus.

Most of all, I think students as well as other success-bound souls miss the advice of a Shakespeare, who wrote in *Henry VII*, "To climb steep hills, requires slow pace at first."

The best definition of success, and one which citizens of all ages could well remember, that I have seen was written by Swift in *Gulliver's Travels*.

He wrote, "And he gave it for his opinion, that whoever could make two ears of corn or two blades of grass to grow upon a spot of ground where only one grew before would deserve better of mankind and do more essential service to his country than the whole race of politicians put together."

Though honest politicians are to be praised not pestered, Swift's definition hits the core of the success story. It is not required that men make a million or become president of the United States before they have achieved success. And after they have achieved those positions of affluence, they are not successes if they have lied and cheated to get there. They are not successes if they believe that the ends justify the means just as long as they aren't caught with any of the means in their possession.

And the two students were two-time losers. In one philosophy they were frowned upon for being caught. In mine they lost before they ever stuffed a ballot box. It was merely the incident that revealed their cunning.

Something for Engineers

The Engineers held top billing. In Mid-March, the traditional Engineers Week gave the students in the college an official time for "whooping" it up. The week always is fixed by their patron saint's day, St. Pat.

The College of Engineering is an active, lively one—probably much like it was when you were on the campus. It just becomes a bit more active and lively for the week it chooses its queen, St. Pat, fires Old Trusty, stages its show and drenches the campus streets with green light. (Street lights substitute a green for their normal amber hue.)

As a share in honoring the Engineers, the *Sooner* this month presents a number of stories about the College and engineers.