

Backlog

The tendency among educators is to look with a great deal of suspicion upon the popular teacher—especially if he is a younger man. The assumption is often made that if a man is popular with the students, he must (1) be trading passing grades for his popularity or (2) be a faulty scholar, an unreliable medicine man peddling patent knowledge to the masses. Unfortunately, in many cases, the judges of a popular professor's ethics and scholarship are his less popular colleagues. This is putting too much strain on human nature and giving too much credit to academic objectivity.

This situation is brought home rather forcefully whenever a student favorite is refused tenure by his department and thereby compelled to leave the University upon expiration of his contract. There is such a case at O. U. at the present time. But the issue is much larger than the career of a particular professor. It is simply: What place is to be found for the popular *teacher* in a university community?

Nearly every college and university has brilliant scholars and outstanding researchers who are poor teachers—yet these men and women are recognized as vital to the academic welfare of these institutions. Their prestige is an inspiration to the majors in their fields, especially on the advanced levels. Working with them is a valuable experience, though they may be less than magnetic in classroom lectures. A few professors excel in both respects—the scholars with credentials no one can challenge who are also classroom spellbinders.

But what about the man whose long suit is the classroom, whose greatest contribution is in the interest he can stimulate in his subject? What if this man has little interest in writing scholarly papers to be read largely by other faculty members? What if he would rather spend his limited time with students in the classroom than in pursuing his own academic goals in the library or the laboratory? Surely there is room on any faculty for such men.

This is not merely a question of protecting faculty members of all abilities—far from it. It seems that we have done a fairly good job of that. A man with tenure has as much job security as he could find in any profession. But while protecting the faculty, we sometimes neglect to protect the students from the time wasted in lectures from professors who are neither scholars nor teachers. Perhaps we can afford a few teachers whose chief talent is simply the ability to make education palatable. —CJB

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