

university news: a brief journal of noteworthy happenings

No, Virginia, There Is No Lindsay Wakefield

A recent campus hoax involving a nonexistent professor from Oxford died with a whimper after failing to go over with a bang. Ground was broken for the caper by a publicity release concocted by a couple of students and printed by the *Oklahoma Daily* just before the Thanksgiving holiday. The story announced that Dr. Lindsay Wakefield, professor of metaphysical philosophy at Oxford University in England, was visiting the United States on a speaking tour sponsored by the Society for Intellectual Freedom with expenses being paid out of the Herbert Lehman Memorial Fund.



Lindsay Wakefield?

Dr. Wakefield, the article said, would speak in room 165 of the Union on the evening of Dec. 9. The release went on to mention that the professor had doctorates in philosophy and mathematics but that most of his writing was devoted to history. In 1959, said the story, he was arrested with other participants in a Ban-the-Bomb demonstration in London. It was at the demonstration that Dr. Wakefield met Bertrand Russell, who has described him as "an outstanding figure in political and social thought." (The League of Decency, however, has condemned Wakefield as "the most dangerous foe of accepted moral standards in the world today.") Next came a series of letters to the editor of the *Daily*. Most were plants. Some praised Wakefield; others criticized him and the University for allowing a man of his beliefs to talk here. No, said another, academic freedom was at stake and he must be allowed a forum. The letters were fairly well done—containing effective amounts of earnestness and invective—but

failed to generate any widespread reaction. Most students were unaware of the "controversy," and apathy is as deadly as nerve gas. On the night of Wakefield's talk, a tremendous turnout of two converged on the Union—a lonely couple who drove down from Oklahoma City. The *Daily* in a brief story dutifully announced the talk again, mistakenly identifying Wakefield as teaching at Dartmouth, but on the afternoon of the speech the society cancelled the room it had reserved. A spokesman explained that Wakefield thought the coverage by the *Daily* was too poor to attract a good crowd. Wakefield then faded away to California for a speech, promising to return to OU to speak if the newspaper promotion was improved.

Once again the society reserved a room in the Union for "the most stormy petrel in academic circles." (Wakefield was controversial enough to have been banned from speaking at Dartmouth after "vigorous protests" by campus religious organizations.) Representatives of the society asked the *Daily* to announce Wakefield's second coming with a front-page story, but when the group's leaders were sought to substantiate portions of the publicity release, it was discovered that one had left for home a week before Christmas vacation was to begin. Another was out of pocket also, and their friends were unconvincing and only half-hearted in their attempts at publicizing the talk. The *Daily* was becoming a bit skeptical by this time and refused to print the story without more information and verification. Finally the saga of Lindsay Wakefield fizzled out. One of the hoaxers explained he did it because he wondered what would happen if a controversy developed over whether a speaker would be allowed on the OU campus, especially if he didn't exist. Another said he wanted to demonstrate that everything you read in the papers isn't necessarily so, that newspapers can't check out every story, that managed news by government and other agencies can twist truth to the shape desired. Well, it's a shame Lindsay didn't speak. He sounded like a heck of an interesting fellow.

Poor Bill of Health

The OU School of Medicine is in a "difficult competitive situation," according to Dr. James L. Dennis, dean of the school and director of the OU Medical Center. In a report to the Board of Regents on faculty salaries and recruiting, Dr. Dennis said the medical school recently lost a professor to Baylor at double the salary and added that two other faculty members have resigned to go to new institutions. In addition to new schools throughout the nation, he said, other medical schools "are far ahead of us in terms of salaries and money from the state per student admitted."

OU's medical school gets state money totaling \$15,800 for each student admitted. Arkansas gets \$25,600 and Kansas receives six or seven times as much as OU, he said. Nebraska is the only medical school in the Big Eight with less state aid than OU. Dr. Dennis said the average faculty for the medical school is about \$12,000, compared to a \$14,000 regional average on the national level. He also expressed concern about the lack of fringe benefits at the medical school and said the current retirement plan is the same as for a first grade teacher in Oklahoma.

Rapid Transit at OU



Soonerville Trolley

It's no monorail, but at least there's a transit system serving the University. The system is composed entirely of a rather venerable Ford bus dubbed the Soonerville Trolley, which makes a 20-minute circle of the campus to aid foot-weary youth. Privately owned, the Trolley, which has an economical 10-cent fare, has been in operation since early autumn.

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Parking ...

Three campus buildings which have been familiar landmarks to University alumni will soon be eliminated and replaced by 270 new parking spaces for faculty and staff members. The buildings to be removed are Johnson House on Elm Avenue, the Jenkins Building at Jenkins Avenue and Boyd Street and the Home Economics Nursery School at Felgar Street and Jenkins. President G. L. Cross told the Board of Regents that the removal of these old facilities is necessary because a number of faculty parking spaces have been lost due to new construction on campus.

LARRY MCDADE



Home Economics Nursery



Johnson House



Jenkins Building

... And Housing

The University may purchase the Lockett Hotel, now up for sale. Dr. Horace Brown, business and administration vice president said the advantages and disadvantages of owning Norman's only major hotel are being weighed and a recommendation will be made to the board of regents soon. The five-story, 12-year hotel was to be auctioned in December by the federal government but no one would bid \$196,667, the minimum price the government would accept. The hotel was put up for sale to pay off a \$129,608 loan, back taxes and other claims against the property which totaled more than \$250,000. If the OU regents decide to put in a bid for the hotel, it will be done in a second sale.

Learning a Language

Fits is that which this here English language gives we Americans often. To use a college student idiom, the mother tongue eats our lunch. Each agonizing year (since 1932) the Junior English Proficiency Examination is given to all third-year students as a kind of college literacy test designed to test handling of mechanics, spelling and organization of thought. The students are required to write a theme on one of a number of topics. Unhappily, about 30 percent fail the examination. This year was no exception. 362 of 1,300 who took the test were defeated by the English language and must enroll in a remedial course which hopefully will smooth the rough spots and allow the graduate to distinguish nouns from verbs on his diploma. The course, formerly called English J (among other things), is listed as English 5.

Recently Dr. Victor Elconin, chairman of the English department, talked with an *Oklahoma Daily* reporter about the exam. A portion of that interview follows:

Q. Does everyone have to take the test?

A. Yes. Though it is not a University requirement, all the departments have adopted the program.

Q. Who makes out the test and who grades it?

A. A committee from the English department does both. In grading, each exam is read and evaluated by at least two different members of the committee.

Q. Are students with certain majors graded differently?

A. No. This is just a foolish rumor. We pay no attention to whose paper we are grading.

Q. Are there definite criteria which the test follows year after year?

A. Yes. The test comprises the principles of freshman English. Passing simply means you can do C work or better in freshman English.

Q. How do you account for students who passed English 21 and 22 (the freshman courses) failing the the exam?

A. These students have lapsed into their old habits. They are the ones we are looking for. That's why we wait until the junior year to administer the test—to find these students and reintroduce them to the skills of writing. We don't want to graduate students who can't express themselves intelligently.

Q. Doesn't that make extra work for the English department?

A. Of course. And nothing would make us happier than to abolish the test because the students no longer needed it. But they do.

Q. Is there anybody who likes the test?

A. Yes. In spite of the general uproar each semester, we are constantly getting letters of appreciation from graduates. Even some students currently enrolled in English 5 have words of praise.

The reporter asks why so many fail and then quotes Dr. Albert R. Kitzhaber, professor of English at the University of Oregon and past president of the National Council of Teachers of English who criticizes "the appalling state of English instruction in this country." Dr. Kitzhaber points out that 50 percent of high school English teachers majored in English in college and that only eight percent of the training received by elementary teachers is devoted to the language arts. The reporter concludes that there is some basis for the uproar each semester about the English Proficiency Exam but asks if the uproar is for the right reasons.