

## KICKING THE HABIT con't

legitimate, but to bring out the best in him in the face of a series of challenges. Competition can and does lead to the actualization of one's potential.

To don or not to don our lecturing robes. Although the author has not discussed the problem of lecturing vs. no lecturing in his recent article, his views on the subject are too well known to be spared a brief consideration. Also one cannot but feel at least some admiration for a man who can practice what he preaches even though what he preaches might be quite wrong. There is fairly strong temptation to respond to a position that maintains that lectures are almost useless and a waste of time for both professors and students.

First, the empirical evidence - respect for facts. The evidence comes from an interesting little book by Don Bligh entitled "What's the Use of Lectures" (Penguin Books, 1972). Don't let the title mislead anyone into reading it - the book does not question the use of lectures. It deals with, in the words of the author, two questions - 1. What lectures can be used for and 2. how they should be used. It is concluded that they can be used to teach information including the framework of the subject, but an expository approach is unsuitable to stimulate thought or change attitudes. Suggestions are made in the

light of psychological and experimental evidence, on ways of organizing information, teaching a single idea, use of feedback techniques, etc. Also lectures were not found to be the single most effective method for teaching information, nor the most popular method with the students.

Even though lectures cannot compete with audio-visual methods nor do they add much by way of wisdom, I do believe (and it is only a belief, not a hypothesis) that the give and take of a live teacher is an important dimension in University education. Lectures simply provide the most economical measure of providing this give and take (although I grant that at most of the time there is more of simply giving - a weakness that must be corrected as far as classroom conditions will permit). Even the boredom of some lectures - (and I have had my share of them both as a giver and taker) is not to be misconstrued as having no value at all. Excitement and enjoyment help but are not necessary conditions of learning. And paradoxical as it may sound, it is true (i.e. there is empirical evidence - behavioural and neurophysiological) that boredom is a high arousal or drive condition. With a little bit of luck, therefore, boredom with classes

the position adopted by the author. They could al-

so derive from an alternate position such as the present one.

can give birth to an Einstein!!

All's well that ends well. The Cregier five point plan came as somewhat of an anti-climax - what starts with a bang ends in a whisper. Let me recapitulate these five proposals. 1. there be ungraded courses (we already have provision for auditing), evaluation be student-centered (it always is), unstructured, non-competitive (doesn't make sense), and continuous (fine). 2. for students who expressly request formal graded evaluation, examinations be given by external examiners (hurrah, I like that because I have been through it myself). 3. use of standardized achievement tests given by such organizations as ETS SACU (structured or unstructured standardization?) 4. recommendations and evaluations drafted with student consultation. 5. Grades to be treated as confidential and released with the student's approval.

The only modification I would like to propose is to make suggestion number 1 (ungraded courses) optional and number 2 (formal exams) the general rule. All five points made a great deal of sense in spite of all that preceded it! What was all that diatribe about anyway (full of sound and fury, signifying nothing), when these suggestions do not strictly follow as conclusions from

It is far better to make an attempt to change the attitudes of students and professors towards exams & grades than to give up the trust and responsibility that society has placed in the hands of its teachers by saying - 'student' - teach thyself!'

Meeting the needs of today's students may well consist in making demands. As John Gardner has observed in his excellent book on "Excellence" (1961) - "And woe to the society that loses the gift for such evocation! When an institution, organization or nation loses its capacity to evoke high individual performance, it's great days are over."

Back to metaphor. Our educational baby certainly needs a good clean wash & maybe the little devil needs to mend some of its manners too. But better a reformed devil than a lemming-like suicidal march to the formal deep blue sea.

From structure to chaos (nonstructure) is a law of thermodynamics not of human dynamics. Examine thyself!!!

# WANTED

## THE STATE



For Crimes against individuals  
**Theft** - Taxation, confiscation of drugs, books, weapons, etc.  
**Repression** - censorship, liquor laws  
**Kidnapping** - compulsory indoctrination of children in state schools  
**Nuisance** - licensing, drug raids, vice raids, etc.  
**Fraud** - Social security, insurance, public education, foreign aid, and various other social experiments.  
**Aliases:** Uncle Sam, Public Servant or Interest, Welfare State, Big Brother, Big Government.  
**Description:** weight - getting heavier all the time  
 eyes - they're everywhere  
**Caution:** subject is heavily armed and dangerous.