

Public Misconceptions About English Department Cleared Up

A plug for research in the humanities was delivered last Thursday by U of A English Professor R. G. Baldwin.

Addressing the monthly meeting of the Humanities Association, Dr. Baldwin denied public misconceptions about research in the English department.

He said he did not spend his summers reading slim volumes of French poems over a glass of absinthe, nor did he wear a Tam (headgear) at a rakish tilt.

Research involves investigation and organization of contemporary, historical, and foreign literature, as well as interpretative scholarship.

Dr. Baldwin was presenting a research paper to Humanities on "A Chaucer Puzzle—The Canon's Yeoman's Tale." He said this minor tale of The Canterbury Tales was subject to general misunderstanding in its interpretation, and offered an alternative suggestion.

The tale is divided into two sections following a prologue. In the prologue, a Canon and his Yeoman gallop madly up to the pilgrims who are taking turns telling stories on their way to Canterbury. This interruption at once provides a digression and another tale for the poem's elaborate framework.

The Yeoman begins to "con" the pilgrims, say most interpreters, but when the Host begins to needle him, he breaks sudden-

ly into an emotional tirade against alchemy and alchemists. The Canon tries to shut him up, and when this doesn't work, rides off quickly.

At this point the Yeoman changes his tirade and begins telling a story about a Canon who is an alchemist—he says it isn't his matter—who goes around generally rooking the public to support his alchemic obsession.

Traditional scholarship interprets this at face value, implying that there are two Canons—the one who rides up with the Yeoman, and the one in the Yeoman's tale after the first one has galloped off.

Dr. Baldwin, applying some psychological study of motivation and probable situation, suggested that instead there is only one

Canon—that the Canon the Yeoman begins to abuse in his tale is actually the Canon he works for—and by whom he has just been abandoned because he appeared to be threatening the Canon with exposure as a con man and charlatan.

Dr. Baldwin said the traditional interpretation made the poem appear incomplete and less coherent—as if

Chaucer had bungled, while his own rationalization tied up loose ends.

In a question period which followed, it was suggested that alternatives to this theory could be (a) Chaucer didn't write the entire tale himself, or (b) it was suggested by a tale in Boccaccio's Decameron, or (c) Chaucer was fascinated by the psychology of the con man in the same way as other modern writers.

Campus Socred President Elected Provincial Veep

Ray Speaker, president of the campus Social Credit Club, was elected second vice-president of the Alberta Young Social Credit League at the annual provincial convention Saturday, November 19.

Mr. Speaker is a third year education student from Enchant, Alberta. He took one year of University at Calgary, then taught four years at Taber High School before coming to the University of Alberta for his

B.Ed.

Six delegates from the U of A Socred group attended the all-day convention in the Macdonald Hotel. Other delegations represented Edmonton City, Calgary, Holden, and Medicine Hat. Education Minister, A. O. Aalberg was guest speaker.

Among the resolutions presented by the U of A group and passed by the convention was a proposal for student exemption from unemployment insurance fund contributions. Another called for revision of adop-

tion laws such that the religion of a child's parents shall not bind the adoption agencies in selection of a home for the child, unless the parent so specifies.

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