

# pass-fail system may be instituted

by Michelle Quesnel

Students presently playing the university game may find that they are no longer racking up points. For the past year, the University of Alberta has been experimenting with a new grading system, whereby a student is assigned a mark of "pass" or "fail" rather than a number grade.

The idea of the pass-fail system was initially broached to the GFC by David Leadbeater, 1969-70 Students' Union President. It was felt at that time that the pass-fail grading would encourage students to take more diversified courses and eliminate some of the competitive atmosphere.

Sociology Professor W. Meloff, chairman of the Committee on the Investigation of Teaching, explained that any interested instructor could take part in the experiment, providing certain requirements were met. Dr. Dirk Schaeffer, of the Psychology department, outlined these requirements:

- Participation by staff and students must be voluntary.
- All junior courses must be graded using the present 9-point system.
- No student may receive a pass-fail grading in the subject of his major.
- Students are allowed 1 full-year pass-fail course or

two half-year courses per year.

Dr. Meloff added that all instructors would continue to keep unofficial records of the students' numbered grades.

The pass-fail system, said Dr. D. L. Schaeffer, would be applicable only to a few of the courses now being offered. One example, is an advanced course in Educational Psychology, which he described as an "encounter course". Fields of study requiring a high degree of technical competence, such as medicine, would not have the pass-fail option.

Dr. Meloff felt that the system would put students at a great disadvantage when applying for a

grant or a scholarship, as these are awarded on a grade-comparison basis. Dr. Schaeffer agreed that this would be a problem if the system were ever to be used exclusively, but said that this is not the aim in view; at present, courses graded "pass" or "fail" are not being included in the computation of grade-point averages.

Dr. Schaeffer felt that many staff members presently opposing the pass-fail system are doing so because they suspect that the students might be able to "misuse it" or because they fear that it could get out of hand.

Interest from both staff and students has been considerable,

Dr. Schaeffer said, although many students were bothered by the idea that the deans of their faculties might not accept pass-fail grades. This has not been a problem though.

In the few courses taking part in the experiment, the pass-fail system proved quite successful, although it is an interesting point that no student registered in a pass-fail course has yet received a failing mark.

Dr. Schaeffer added that the Committee on the Investigation of Teaching has not yet reported back to GFC, but says that he hopes the pass-fail system will be instituted in at least a few courses within the next few years.

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# AMCHITKA MAY BE CANCELLED



PROGRESS?

## Yearbook finally arrives

The yearbook will finally arrive sometime Thursday after a succession of delays that is little short of incredible.

The man responsible for actually completing the book, and to all reports a very creditable job, is Doug Oakely. The yearbook had a budgeted cost of approximately \$25,750 and was five months in production. The cost is substantially lower than previous years because the number of copies was kept to an absolute minimum; only those who placed a deposit in the spring will receive a copy.

Students who still have their receipts will be able to pick the book up at the SUB information desk. People who originally handed in their receipt so the yearbook could be mailed out to them and who now decide to pick it up in person will be able to do so by producing their ID card, as the information desk have all the receipts listed alphabetically. The end of October will probably be designated as a cut-off date. After that date, the remaining copies will be mailed to the people who placed deposits.

According to Students' Union

Treasurer, Frans Slater, this will be the last edition of the Evergreen and Gold because of the student body's general apathy towards its publication. Council feels that the yearbook has become an impracticality for a university of this size.

People who would like a more detailed record of their own activities can take heart from the fact that several faculties, engineering and medicine to date are considering producing their own yearbooks. To facilitate these ambitions, council is proposing a \$3,000 grant to the faculties.

(CUP)--Senior Representatives of the American government assured the University of Calgary student newspaper, *The Gauntlet*, that the threatened Amchitka atomic test will certainly be delayed and probably cancelled.

Meanwhile, about 3500 Vancouver-area students and 1200 University of Calgary students protested against the threatened blast over the weekend, either by marches or petitions. Earlier that week the American Senate and Congress had placed total responsibility for the decision of holding or cancelling the test on the shoulders of president Richard Nixon.

The U.S. Atomic Energy Commission, an agency of the American government, conceived of the Amchitka test as an adjunct to the American anti-ballistic program, a program already approved by the U.S. congress.

But arguments against the blast seem to outweigh those defensive ones in favor of it. These arguments include:

Potential radiation leaks since the blast could be in an unstable geological area, i.e. along the San Andreas fault.

Political and technological developments which make the test unnecessary, and Tidal wave and other potentially-disasterous ramifications of the blast.

According to Gauntlet sources, the executive branch of the U.S. government now feels that a potentially disasterous nuclear war is neither necessary nor inevitable. Defence against war-oriented thinking and action can be achieved without exposing the planet to the inherent problems of the Amchitka blast.

The problem with the U.S. decision-making echelons has apparently been that AEC technocrats figured out how to do something and are now fighting to

justify the decision and the expenditure of \$160 million. However, since the congress had already approved the ABM program, the problem was not totally their creation.

But the proposed 5-megaton blast has also brought to light other factors that the AEC did not take into consideration. Every seven years the danger of earth tremors along the San Andrea fault is at its most extreme because of the wobble of the earth's axis.

This happens to be the seventh and most dangerous year.

The experience of atomic testing in Nevada shows the AEC tests. Large areas of the state of Utah, for example, were exposed to extreme radiation levels because of the Nevada tests.

The decision to cancel Amchitka was really made over a month ago, Gauntlet sources report, and Nixon has received many representations on the matter, including a respectful suggestion that it might not be wise to insist upon California's premature and physical secession from the American union.

Apart from the lack of adequate examination of the problem by the AEC, the Americans admit that the problem was created by communication difficulties within their government structure. According to Gauntlet sources, the executive branch admits that the AEC was probably misdirected, and stand ready to share some of the blame.

One of the countries affected by the proposed blast, Japan, has made strenuous representation to the Americans. Tidal waves from the Amchitka blast would affect all the Pacific rim area, including British Columbia, but apart from a motion of the Canadian House of Commons, Canadian protests do not seem to have been too strenuous up to now.