

FACULTY FORUM

by STEVAN D. KARON

The aim of this column will be to give a chance to the faculty members to comment on a topic, in their field, which interests the student body.

To start this series I have asked Professor A. R. Donaldson, Assistant Professor of the English department to comment his views on Examinations. Before writing out his views, which I have tape recorded, I would like to take this opportunity to thank him publicly for taking time out of his busy schedule for this interview. I appreciated this very much as Professor Donaldson really seems to fit the category of an ideal professor who is available whether to help or advise any student who is interested in advancing academically.

My first question that I posed dealt with a matter that I think every Freshman has on his mind presently. That is: "Why Freshmen have to write Christmas examinations while the rest of the students do not have any?"

Professor A. R. Donaldson: "The answer to this is that it is to their benefit to have these examinations. While they may think that they are hard done by, by having to write these exams there is the fact that we in the English department end up often with up to 500 exams with our Christmas dinner to be marked in a much shorter order than exams in the end of the year. The reasons these exams are given is quite simply this, that a long time ago, ten to fifteen years ago, it was customary for all students to write Christmas exams which if I can remember counted up to 40% of their final marks. These were dispensed with as they seemed to eat up lecturing and teaching time and it was felt that it was not really necessary to spend this much time by exam-

ining. That one exam in the end of the year was plenty.

As far as Freshmen were concerned, I think there was a period when they were not given any either but it had been discovered that too many Freshmen failed their final exam because they were unfamiliar with University examinations and unfamiliar with what was expected from them and the Christmas examination in point of fact represented largely for most departments and certainly for us, as a dress rehearsal for the final examination. So that the Freshmen could find out in December when there is still time to do something about it whether his work is or not up to the standard of the University. And so when he writes Christmas examination in short and makes 70% or 60%, depending on his ability then, he is on a fair way on passing in the end of the year. On the other hand a student is somewhat under 50% then he has a chance to go see the instructor to find out what is wrong and to pull up his socks while there is still time to do something about it.

In other words, the Christmas examination is a kind of a dress rehearsal to give students an idea of how much work he should be doing and let him know whether or not he was doing enough.

Another thing about it is that the University examination is, as any University student knows,

quite different from the sort of an examination that they had been given in High School. There is a certain adjustment to be made and we would prefer that they made this adjustment on an examination which really does not count very much. If a student needs help in adjusting to the University exams to find out where he went wrong and to avoid students failing these exams not because they don't know the course but because they don't know what is expected of them on the examination. The Freshman should feel grateful rather than feel persecuted that he is given an opportunity to find these things out if he is at all sincere about passing at Christmas, rather than finding it out only when it is too late at the end of the year.

This is the reason why I think they were reinstated that is—to cut down the number of Freshmen who fail the year because they underestimated the work or were unfamiliar with the University system, contrary to the general impression which is common among students—that the faculty with which I am working is concerned with failing as much students as it can. It has no set-failure rates as ideally one prefers a no failure rate at all. The purpose of Christmas examination for Freshmen is to cut down failure rate at the end of the year by helping the students who are interested in passing."

The other question I asked was

FILM SOCIETY REVIEW

by ROBERT KERR

To assemble a full film program of documentary short subjects that holds audience interest is a sort of miracle. The Film Society program of Canadian Short Subjects was a minor miracle of that order.

"Lonely Boy", a study of Paul Anka and his fans, was a remarkable job of editing. The candid shots of Anka's teenage fans were effectively interlaced with the scenes featuring Anka himself. Admittedly, the interview scenes were awkward and misrepresentative—a natural result when people of the intellectual calibre concerned are called upon to give unrehearsed comment—but they

were well integrated into the film. The result was revealing, penetrating, and not without entertaining moments.

"Saguenay" showed some very familiar winter forest scenes and some very striking pictures of the Saguenay and its power plants. The emphasis on perspectives was well-done, and only occasionally was the perspective taken uninteresting. On the whole the film showed first rate photography, but it was not integrated adequately to make an absorbing film.

The director of "Nahanni" chose a difficult task—to interweave the scenic beauty of the Nahanni River with a relatively strong story-line of an old man's search for a lost gold mine on the river. As might be expected, the story-line tends to make one overlook the scenery, but the result is preferable to those film efforts which endeavour to tie a scenic setting together with a kindergarten story-line. The film is undeniably engrossing.

about having I.Q. tests as a means of selecting College students.

"I am not entirely qualified to answer this as I am not a psychologist and certainly not an authority on I.Q. tests. But I would be very suspicious of these testing procedures as a means of selecting University material. I have never been convinced of their reliability. I am not too sure of how valid these results sometimes may be that is it depends a good deal on how a student is motivated to do them and I am not really sure that they test everything that is relevant so far as the University is concerned. I feel that the written form of examination is a more reliable system than the simple system of I.Q."

"Circle of the Sun" is an excellent exposition of Canada's Indian problem—the problem of how to deal with an aboriginal minority which is gradually being assimilated, but not integrated, with the world around it, and which is uncertain itself as to the course it wishes to follow. In most other respects this film rates as only slightly above average. Its overall problem theme serves as its main source of unity, and its only real value, but it is an inestimable value at that.

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