

COLLEGE REPORT

By **ROBERT M. BERSI**
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Grades comprise an element of their formal education with which students must daily cope. Usually, they seek after them, compete for them, complain when they feel unjustly treated, and occasionally criticize the concept. We keep grading as a component in our system of education for the unsophisticated reason that it suits our general purposes better than any other system suggested to date. Like the jury system in our courts, it's an imperfect function but the only one available to us. A junior economics student here at CSC-DH, Glen Eden, recently told me that he considers the grading system to be little more than "education by combat." On that subject he wrote the following critique:

By **GLEN EDEN**

In the realms of "Academia" one sometimes hears discussion of the merits and demerits of grading systems. Occasionally the issue even filters into such popular media as Newsweek. Several schools have initiated modest experiments with pass-fail grading, yet the issue is far from resolved.

Let us consider some aspects of the present system. Do grades measure knowledge? If they do, then tests must measure knowledge also, since grades are based mostly on test scores, whether objective or subjective. However, some students have an advantage in taking tests. "Testmanship" is an important factor in both objective

and subjective examinations and one's test scores can be significantly influenced by this. Classroom participation can be used as a basis for grading also. But this is obviously related to the individual student's personality and abilities in oral expression.

ARE GRADES a motivating factor? No doubt they are, at least to some extent. The student who is anticipating an F would quite likely attempt to raise this to a D. Whether the motivating factor is significant in cases where the expectation is for a B as opposed to an A is another question. But in any case, motivation for grades is not motivation for knowledge. Indeed, a student might be very interested in a particular course, but if he is more concerned with his grade than with the knowledge he might gain, he will study the material assigned rather than pursue footnotes and end of chapter bibliographies. In choice of elective courses the grade motivated student will

often take courses where he can expect a good grade even though other courses might be more interesting or helpful to him.

THE PRESENT grading system also has other effects. From the beginning of a child's formal educational experience he receives grades which in all but a few cases tell him what he cannot do; he is measured by five signs of the alphabet; he is rewarded by good grades, not learning; he is in competition with his classmates and engaged in a form of battle with his teachers. Education by combat is a reality and the battle continues even in college where, to continue the metaphor, the victors of the

first 12 years engage equals and a more highly trained faculty. BY NOW you may be expecting a cry for the bomb-shelter of pass-fail. You are correct in substance, but I am for more convinced of the inadequacy of the present system than of the panacea qualities of pass-fail. A recent search through the L.A. Public Library yielded little knowledge of pass-fail, and no definitive studies or evidence of appreciable use. However, at Cal State, Dominguez Hills, we already have a device that can be of significant use in evaluating pass-fail grading. This is the English Proficiency Test given to all juniors. By using pass-

fail in all lower division courses, and comparing the EPT's of juniors who have had two years of pass-fail with those of new juniors who have been on the traditional system, we would be able to determine if pass-fail is a better method. Perhaps some changes or additions to the EPT would be necessary, but these could be made easily.

SOME MAY think that my charge of education by combat exaggerates reality. I certainly do not think that this is the intention of the educational system. But look

ECC Team Competing In Modesto

Members of the El Camino College forensics team are in Modesto today for the first events in a four-day speech tournament sponsored by Phi Rho Pi, national junior college forensics association. Junior colleges throughout the United States are represented at the tournament, which will include competi-

tion in debate, extemporaneous speaking, expository speaking, impromptu speaking, and oral interpretation. El Camino students participating in the event include Jean Billings, Sonia Bacon, Beverly Kelly, Vicki Ropp, Tom Rapp, Judy Hulsey, Bill Brown, and Tim Plax.

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