

Double Jeopardy

CADET SLOUCH

by Jim Earle

Tim Lane

Way back a semester or two ago I took a course that had something to do with law — or maybe it was just regulations.

What ever it was, I remember distinctly a phrase — double jeopardy.

This concerned punishment for proven offenses, and the main idea was that no one should be punished twice for the same thing. And in this country, I am sure the instructor said, the individual is protected from such action by laws and regulations at every level of organized society.

Not at every level, sir.

The college of liberal arts (and perhaps some of the other colleges) has a policy that says an instructor may, at his discretion, lower a student's grade for "an excessive number" of unexcused absences.

Like the old story of a general's wish being a lieutenant's command, some departments, nameless departments of course, have formalized this policy and made it automatic.

One department, for example, allows one cut per credit hour in the course; each cut above this limit lowers the semester grade one letter.

For example, a student with seven cuts in a three hour course has had it, if the policy is enforced — no matter what he has learned.

In theory, this is for his own good—he can't learn very much if he doesn't come to class.

In actuality, he is getting it in the neck twice. If absences do prevent a student's learning what he should in class, his grades will suffer accordingly—sufficient punishment. When the policy is applied, the student has his grades lowered a second time.

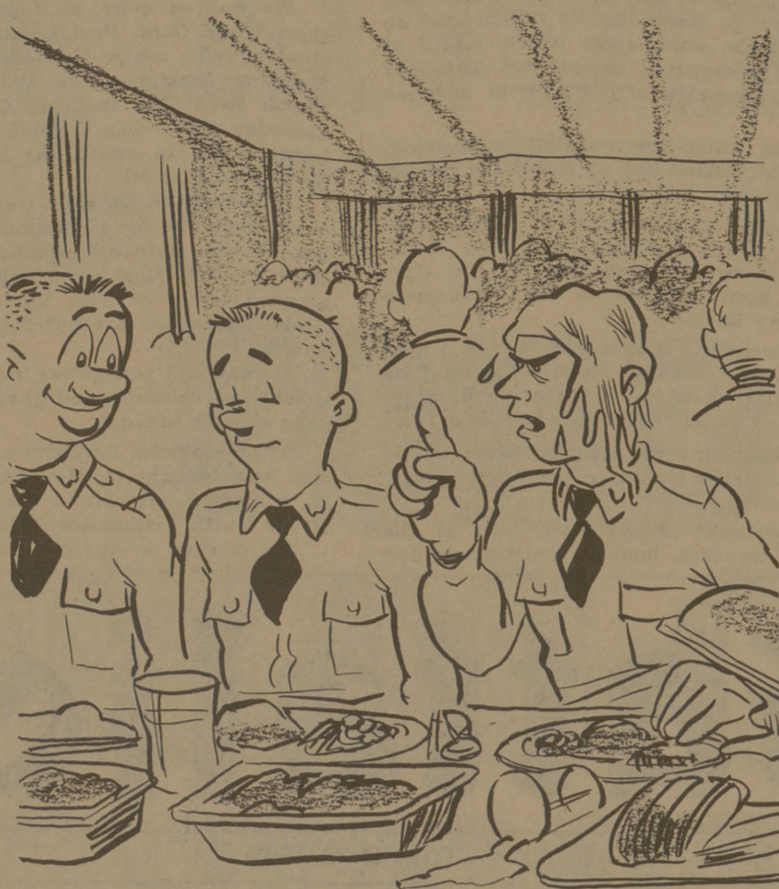
Ketchikan, Alaska, is the wettest city in the continental United States, the National Geographic says. The South Alaskan settlement is inundated by 150 inches of rain annually.

But what if the student is not prevented by several absences from learning all he should? What if his grade average (before application of the policy) is the highest in the class and his attendance is the poorest?

This happens—and every time it does, and the policy is applied, the policy's avowed purpose of helping to protect the student from his own waywardness looks pretty thin.

Call it double jeopardy, or don't, at best this is a policy to intensify what happens as one of the natural results of lax attendance; at worst, it is a policy that unfairly penalizes students who are able to do the required amount of work in less time than their classmates; at base, it appears to be an easy, arbitrary substitute for upgrading the interest level of courses in order to maximize state funds apportioned partially by attendance levels.

A more worthwhile, more practical, and fairer policy might be one that provided for periodic automatic review of the qualifications of instructors and the content of courses in classes which have chronic records of absenteeism.



... not only was that a careless pass, but I asked for corn—not gravy!

— Sound Off —

Editor,
The Battalion:

I want to congratulate you on your recent stand on the demonstrations in protest of the United States policy in Viet Nam, and your support of the United States actions in Viet Nam.

You, the students of A&M, when you take a stand for freedom have delivered a crushing blow against the Communist Party. Their propaganda is aimed at high school and college students. They want you to carry out their dirty work. Your stand will boost the morale of our men in Viet Nam and those that go in the future will go knowing that some of us care.

Keep up your good work and try to influence other college students to do the same. If I

can be of any help, feel free to call or write.

S. D. McDuffie,
Commander
First District,
American Legion

Editor,
The Battalion:

May God bless each of you. Your spirit sounds like our class of '45—20 years ago.

At last good will triumph. What if in 1941 my husband at A&M and me at SMU had acted like these demonstrators today. Our own children which are nearing the age of you students would not be able to live as we do.

Mrs. Arthur Brawner,
Dallas

P.S. Saw varsity's horns off!!

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