

Learning The Hard Way

CADET SLOUCH by Jim Earle

The Texas A&M Board of Directors will soon learn, no doubt, that administering a state institution is public business.

For the second time in four months, the directors attempted to withhold information from the state press but failed.

A writer for the Dallas Times-Herald reported Tuesday that the board approved undiscriminatory coeducation in a secret pre-Thanksgiving meeting held separately from the scheduled session.

Board chairman H. C. Heldenfels and other board members denied the report, but in the process leaked out information that the nine-man group had authorized President Earl Rudder to "consider each female application personally."

Why this authorization was kept such a closely-guarded secret until the Dallas newspaper article appeared remains a mystery. Even the university's information service had no knowledge such action had been taken. The only report made public of the board's coeducation discussion was that a four-man committee had been appointed to study the issue.

It was not the first time the board had attempted to conceal information on the coeducation issue. A Fort Worth Star-Telegram reporter discovered last August that the board chairman had been instructed to ask Attorney General Waggoner Carr for an official opinion on whether or not A&M's coed policy was in violation of the Civil Rights Act.

Managed news and curtailed comments by a public governing body are an injustice both to the people it represents and the organization it serves.

The people of Texas and certainly those

connected with and concerned about Texas A&M have every right to be informed on the developments of coeducation at this traditionally all-male school — an issue which nearly everyone possesses strong feelings about.

They are not receiving straight facts when a smokescreen hides the major decisions. They are not fully informed when policy changes, modifications or questions are withheld.

At a time when Texas A&M stands ready to accept an envied position of prominence among American universities, the very men who guide its fortunes have caused it considerable damage.

An institution that cannot be trusted is viewed with contempt by members of the press who will probe, search and grasp until they uncover its activities.

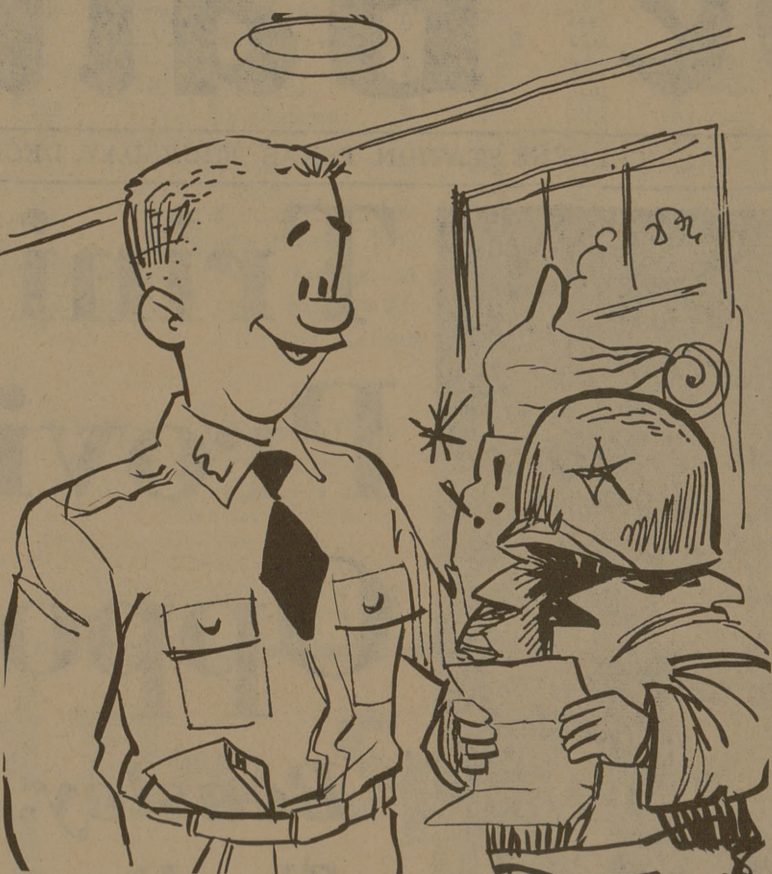
Faculty recruitment, necessary in building a great university, suffers when reports of board action must be gleaned from anonymous sources instead of officials involved.

Students lose faith in their university when they are unable to receive straightforward, responsible comments from their administrators.

The university image loses face throughout the state and nation and potential students back away when activity that hints at secrecy is disclosed.

The Board of Directors must reexamine this unofficial policy of concealing information from the public if Texas A&M is to continue its drive toward excellence in education.

There is no room at this institution for amateur tactics.



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