1923

The Independent Truth: "Truth Answers Five Points of Criticism"

University of Tennessee - Knoxville

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Recommended Citation
http://trace.tennessee.edu/utk_dabn/131
A writer takes issue against the TRUTH for their portrayal of the University of Tennessee. They argue that any student of good moral character and sufficient good entrance credits has the privilege of going to this State institution by taking the necessary entrance examination. They feel that the issue was not publicized properly, and only a few students were aware of it. The authors believe that the TRUTH should work for the good name of the University, and that by not publicizing the information, they are not adhering to the standards of a proper newspaper. They also argue that the TRUTH should not publish information that could cause harm to individual students without proper notification, as this could lead to false accusations and reputational damage. They believe that the TRUTH should strive for accuracy and fairness in their reporting and not engage in harm against students.
Independent TRUTH

OUR RECEPTION

The initial issue of Truth was greeted with unexpected cordiality, which was greatly appreciated. Of course there were some that are always too narrow minded to do anything but follow the lead of those in power, and these used the hammer as much as possible.

The attitude of the administration was very surprising and almost disappointing to the editors of the Truth as they secretly hoped that the administration, when it realized that there were really discontent among the student body would cooperate in an effort to eliminate the trouble. We see now that the situation was much better handled without changing the animal.

If the administration had been right, they might have been able to stop such an anonymous paper. They could not help but see that the Truth was the best interest of the school but it had to be used questionable methods in order to present its ideas.

The administration should have seen that the Truth was working for the best interests of the school and trying to bring better conditions. They should have seen that an onenee paper would not be understand over the state and if its criti- cisms were false that it would hurt the school. Yet they apparently paid no attention to the matter and pretended that it was beneath their notice. Believe me, they noticed it and would have done anything to get something on any one who had anything to do with its publication.

If our criticisms were false and the administration knew that they were in the right, they would have done anything to stop such a paper. What we had hoped for was an invitation from the authorities to make ourselves known on the condi- tion that we would not be fired for the Truth. After we had presented ourselves they could have shown us where we were wrong and we would have devoted this issue to the school and tried to prove our facts.

Since the administration remains quiet and makes no effort to publicly correct any of our misrepresenta- tions or criticisms, the only conclusion that we can draw is that they can not face the facts fairly and honestly and hope to show us where we are wrong for the simple reason that they would have done anything to stop the magazine. This is just as true for the student body as it is for the administration.

STUDENT EXPRESSION

Under the guise of apparent in- difference to the TRUTH, the au- thorities are doing all they can to SECRETLY DETECT the backers of it. This is the very thing they should do, but why don’t they do it above board.

The first move of the Powers was to call an absolutely false meeting of the Publication council to inform the students of the “students” weekly column where there was to be absolutely no mention of the columns of the Or- ange and White of the question of the Art department, that is, the work of Dr. Sproul, and above all things there was to be no mention of the Truth. This session they were to be absolutely secret, for you know “there is no official censorship of the press at U. T.” but the Truth will cut it.

Now these three questions above all others are the most interesting to the student body. Now if ever the students should express their opinions. If The Truth is merely the expression of a small discontented element, why were the columns of the Orange and White thrown open to the “more level head- ed” students to vent their anger on an anonymous paper criticizing the band and show where it was in er- ror? There is but one answer and that is that the administration fears to quantify with the Truth because it is ignorant of the Truth.

The editor of the Orange and White has been criticized very unkindly by several student publications. This is not the situation she has taken in some of the recent questions. Let us say in her behalf that it is not her fault, for the editor of the “student publica- tions” are only fit pawns in the hands of the Administration, the fact that they have taken up a show for the school. We hap- pen to know that the editor’s recent column was the direct result of a meeting conferences with the Dean and perhaps nothing else but that editorial could do. The publication of 1911 was absolutely controlled by the administra- tion, refused to allow the paper to publish the reply of the Arg department this week. Is this fair play? If it is not, is it right to expect men who train the leaders of tomorrow to practice fair play?

The Truth wants to urge the edi- tors to continue their work. We do not wish to see the publication of the Hill, in spite of the administration and leave the dis- cussion of the school problems to the Truth, as that is the only feasible way to do this. We wish to urge the admin- stration to discuss the situation, to bring about any changes for the school. However we do not hesitate to ask the public to express their feelings and we hope that this is something that they will do.

We wish to commend the Knox- nville News, for its fearless publishing of the facts concerning the Univer- sity.

The other Knoxville papers boost the good and had indirectly in- deed appear to shut their eyes to the bad. The Knoxville News makes an intelligent disinterested, and activi- ty ally itself to the side of progress. Progress does not lie in the direc- tion in which the other newspapers of the city are tending. Indiscrimi- nately boosting may help a community in material matters, but it is doubtful that it will do even that in the long run, but we are absolutely sure it will not advance us morally and intellectually.

Again let us say that the Knoxville News has published all they can have been asserted. How- ever, we regret that the extracts from Epton Strong’s book was pub- lished, for granting that it was a direct quotation, it misrepresented the facts entirely outside of his Unitarian be- liefs. The administration would not take the trouble to read such a book, it just happens to know the facts in this case, or we too, might be mis- taking the truth, surface indications as Sinclair was.

DESTRUCTIVE CRITICISM

The editors of the Truth have been careful to take into consideration the criticism that has been made of this sinewy effort on our part, but before the public a few conditions that exist. We hear “destructive criticism” and wonder what that is. It is not the students’ place to voice these facts, that it is going to hurt the University, etc.

It is rather difficult to see just how an expression of the truth could be a criticism, unless the truth itself hurts its maker. We wish this move had been made by others, because we realize the fact that in a great many minds we are not given the credit for our power of understanding and sincerity. But it was not and we are very glad that the students who is in closer touch with the conditions at the University than the students may for their own dances.

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The Truth About Why Don’t Trustees Receive Petitions Addressed to Them?

Last year practically every honour society in school, every literary and debating club, the president of every allied organisation, and the Dean of the University, sign a petition addressed to the Trustees of the University of Tennessee asking for a department of public speaking. Dean Hockins has always talked in favor of the pro, and President Morgan has, when forced to the wall, always admitted the ability to speak in public. He has, as essential to a graduate of the agricultural department as to a graduate of the department of medicine. Yet after agreeing to present the petition in question to the proper board, the "Powers That Be" proceeded to absolutely pigeonhole the petition in Dean Hockins' office.

This action, as seen, was taken without any notice to any of the members of the Senate, of the Debating Council of the University. The ability to speak in public is one of the essential things that can be learned by those who wish to make their training influential in the world, which expends money in taxes for the support of the University. If the graduates of the college can not tell their future people back the things which they have learned while in college, then they have done nothing. So well, they are not properly trained for the benefits of their people back home. And unless we have a liberal class of department of public speaking, we cannot properly train our graduates for this service.

The chief question we can ask about the pigeonholing of the petition is, WHY did the "Powers That Be" promise to present it, and speak so favorably about the petition last year, is, WHY did they promise to present it to the trustees, even though the institution has such largely increased funds on hand. Instead, they presented the regular routine matters, and further needs of our Agricultural Department, which had itself endowed the movement heartily so that its growth could be helped by such a speaking course in preference to the usual cut-and-dried English course.

Another petition which was subscribed to, voluntarily, by over ninety per cent of the students body, that which asked for a "Blanket Tax" with which to support student activities. The tax, as proposed, would receive the backing of every organisation in school, every social group, and most of the progressive members of the faculty. Signing for it was made purely voluntary on the part of the students, yet the largest majorly known in the history of the institution heartily endorsed it.

As it was worked out in the plan, any student who could not afford to pay the tax, which was for athletics, publications, Y. M. C. A. and Students' Club receptions and entertainments, given for the benefit of the entire student body—and all of whom carry interest to every loyal Tennessean, as said, any student who could not afford to pay the tax, was to have the advantage of escape absolutely from it, by appearing in private before some one of the higher faculty powers and stating that fact. And any man who was a whole man would not be afraid to make such a statement to any of the University officials, as of whom are trying their best in every possible way to aid these men and women, who are earning their way through college and who would be unable to pay the proposed tax. And the proposed tax is of sufficient value to the life of the institution, it is advertising it, and helping its morals, to warrant the use of compulsion to get able men to pay for their assistance, purely for the good of the school.

Anyway—the faculty, meaning the "Powers That Be" agreed that the students who were taking the greatest steps and conducting the campaign, secured a ninety per cent signature favoring the proposal, they would take it to the Board of Trustee for their action, and would favor it so far as they could do so, as the authorities of the school. Now, ninety per cent is an enormous amount—yet it was ignored in second time.

And the result? Oh, as usual, the "Powers That Be" proceeded to refuse to allow the matter to come to the trustees at all—either with or without sanction. Their words pledged for the matter evidently did not bind them—it was not in black and white, except as published in the Orange and White. It was in the air, some where about the campus. But they had not signed any bond, and the students' rights are nothing, when they can not do so their scheme, conflicting with the desires of the Powers, was ignored completely, even after they had the almost impossible condition imposed upon them by the president of the University, and secured the ninety per cent signature from the student body. Again we ask, why don't our petitions reach the Trustees?

Why is it that a student, just because he is a student, is looked on as incompetent to discuss the questions of the day? Just because the first issue of the Truth was not a yellow sheet and seemed to show a little original thought, may people who would not agree that it was the work of the students but the result of a committee, or part of some plan of the faculty, or the alumni? We feel greatly complimented at these conjectures, but why are they made? Those who did concede that the Truth was the work of the students, refused to credit it on that account. The average citizen fails to realise that over 25 per cent of our student body are of age and just as much citizens as any other. With this general impression of the student abroad, is it not high time that the student showed up to the world?

We think so, and since it is impossible for us to use our own publications, we are forced to turn to the use of an anonymous paper.

We understand that the Dean in a conversation with one of the faculty, mildly laughed at the Truth, and said that its editors should not be directed, but ought to make themselves known. Now we don't think an anonymous paper should be signed at all, for it will be rather criticized and probably hurt the school. Therefore we challenge him to make his paper as powerful as the public in writing, and we challenge him that we can afford to make our names known.

The Student

Why is it that a student, just because he is a student, is looked on as incompetent to discuss the questions of the day? Just because the first issue of the Truth was not a yellow sheet and seemed to show a little original thought, may people who would not agree that it was the work of the students but the result of a committee, or part of some plan of the faculty, or the alumni? We feel greatly complimented at these conjectures, but why are they made? Those who did concede that the Truth was the work of the students, refused to credit it on that account. The average citizen fails to realise that over 25 per cent of our student body are of age and just as much citizens as any other. With this general impression of the student abroad, is it not high time that the student showed up to the world?

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The Student
It is Better to Take a Step Backwards that Rapid Progress May Come than to Slow Down and Stop Because a Wall Cannot be Pushed Without a Lunge. A Step Back, and a Lunge Goes Through, When Steady Progress is Stopped.

Many students fear the Truth will hurt the University. Many alumni wonder if the Truth will hinder the progress of our institution. Many citizens expect Truth to be the cause of a step backward by the State University.

The publishers of the Truth realize that the University will suffer because of their publication, but they believe, firmly that the suffering of the institution will be little new compared to what would happen should conditions go on as they are. Should one resist and operation to remove a cancer on the grounds that suffering will result?

Andrew Carnegie once said a new living destroyed thereby losing much time and money, but another building be put in place of the one destroyed paid for both before the older would have paid for itself. The fire and delay hurt for the time being but paid in the end. Though the Truth hurts U. T. at present, it will remove a million from its neck, and will fit Tennessee to run the race faster and safer.

The Truth may hinder the progress of U. T., like the paving of a street hinders traffic, but who can object to the delay caused by laying of good pavements? Truth will for a time slow the march, but shortly Tennessee will have a more rapid smoother, and continued progress, with all hands happy in the fellowship.

So many think the Truth hurts, hinders, and is a temporary step backward, but shortly Tennessee will emerge healed of the wounding, with her path well defined and full of energy gained through the and experience of a step backward that the forward rush could carry all obstacles. The Truth believes it can give Tennessee a more rapid growth than ever known, a better realization of the students' needs, and a closer fellowship between every person on the Hill; and on these grounds does feel justified in the temporary disturbance it is causing.

THE REAL ISSUE

In the midst of all this meaningless talk about evolution we as representative and thoughtful students of the University of Tennessee have not lost our bearings.

In the first place, however, since the matter of evolution has been forced upon the consideration of the University and public during the last year, it may be well to say that what is understood as evolution by the scientists is not at all the same thing as the idea comprehended under the term by the association of churches and ministers who have been publishing resolutions in demand of the supposed stand of the president (a stand which they have made no direct move to verify) on the subject.

But discussion of the matter would lead us too far afield. We would simply say that if, under cover of the "Bryanesean" orthodoxy (if it exists) of the administration of the University, three authors of resolutions believe that they have made a blanket complaint upon our grievances, and are in possession of the cure therefore, this are very wide of the mark.

Not one of the many associated editors of the Truth is either actively or passively concerned with the question of evolution. They are profoundly interested, however, in the standing and in the healthy growth of what can be one of the greatest of our American institutions of learning if it can be made to thrive through all its parts and branches (including the administrative branch) for genuine academic progress, unfraid of publicity or the searchlight of truth.

What is the issue? Did you not read with the lines as well as between them, in the last number of this paper, that we are convinced that the human element that is guiding our helm is not functioning in such a way as to inspire the best results in any quarter? If we did not say so in so many words, you recognized that we "had it in" for the "Presidentialism" as it is nicknamed by some (and has since our issue, been overwhelmingly proved) in our governing body, with special reference to him to whom has been given the responsibility of the administration (a branch) for genuine academic progress, unfraid of publicity or the searchlight of truth.

The Right of Petition

Since the nobles of England in the Middle Ages forced King John at Runnymede to grant them certain privileges and rights, now known as the Magna Carta, the civilized people of the world have been struggling and even fighting for freedom of speech and a voice in government. This has been traced through the centuries by such events as the French Revolution and the Revolution culminating in the World War, which, as is said, was fought to preserve democracy and to destroy autocracy. While this has been a world-wide movement, it seems that the University of Tennessee has been moving in the opposite direction. It has not been influenced by the changes that have come about in many of our universities and colleges toward a more liberal administration, until now there exists a virtual autocracy.

The editors of the Truth—and we refer to that we represent the sentiments of the majority of students on the Hill, if our observation be correct—think that we have a right to know something of the administration which directly affects the life of the student. We have been informed from a reliable source that there have been two faculty meetings since the opening of the University in the fall. If this be true, how can the students' interests be represented? Is not the faculty in a position to know more administrative individuals, their desires and thoughts, than any other group, and if the faculty seldom meets to discuss common issues, how is the students' viewpoint to be presented? Therefore, student publications are censored by this same autocratic administration. Because of this condition, the students have been forced to adopt other means of expressing themselves, resorting to sermons at various times in the past, but with the same result. It is doubtful whether these petitions are ever considered. One recently presented, more than a week ago, thought no response from the administration.

Such a condition of things can have nothing but a demerit effect on the new students.

The high school graduate comes to the Hill imbued with the spirit of democracy that has been taught him through his whole school career, only to find himself thrust into an environment of absolute autocracy. He soon learns that he has no right to free expression, and that his thinking is for him. He driven in '41's atmosphere four years, if he remains at the University, and finds his bound hands and his powers of independent thought. If he dare to complain, he is promptly told that if he acts like the way things are run, he can withdraw and go elsewhere. But this is not always possible, as many students are not financially able to go to another institution, and are therefore forced to remain, often against their inclinations.

What we would like to see is a more liberal attitude on the part of the administration in dealing with the student. Why could a University not take a forward step and place its administration, as far as the student is concerned, on a plane comparable with our other universities? Why does there not be a council composed of the administrative officers, the members not be a council composed of the students with the student, and a representative group of students, to sit on each case?

En masse as the administration has been autocratic, and to that extent, we desire a change be advisable in method of procedure, if not personnel. And, if the present administrative heads are too se in their ways to meet the growing demand for a change, and cannot expand with the general tendencies with regard to student administration, then they are not big enough for the positions they hold. The success of any great enterprise, although somewhat dependent on the people, and there are cases where a man in the University of Tennessee who have, been with it for a number of years, of liberal views and broad outlook, who can take over the reins.

We have an absolute need for a dean of the University who has a broad education and much varied experience. As for the president it does not so much matter. Under modern conditions the function of the latter is mainly to look after the more or less purely material necessities, legislative appropriations and the like. But we absolutely must have, if we are to progress out of the "Presidentialism" to which we are now subject, someone who is sympathetic and approachable, cultivated (I could say more), intellectually active man as the responsible of our academic activities. With such a guide the university will take on a new air. Our administration is not in the way of our institution will lead on indefinitio thrust by "star chamber methods." Somebody has to say something.