

# 'Let This Be The Spirit of Rice' -- 1912

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(This is the second of a series of articles on student government at Rice. The first dealt with the Campanile problem which has brought more basic issue to a head. This one deals with the author's view of the Real Problem in administration-student relations — Justice and Government.)

The Rice Student Body:

"It owns the college, loves the college, runs the college."

LET THIS BE THE SPIRIT OF RICE."

—Edgar Odell Lovett

Government by students at a university is, of course, unique as governments (come and) go. The authority and nature of the government is not derived from the "people" as in a democracy, or even in spite of them, as in a dictatorship.

Rather authority is obtained from a higher authority, the university founders and the administrators, and this authority to govern is usually fostered as a result of two interrelated circumstances: because of the beneficence of the administrators of the university—i.e., government is a grant; and because certain characteristics intrinsic to students—perhaps the temporary triumph of reason—makes them "political animals" and quasi-independent thinkers such that the absence of government is an impossibility—i.e., government is very much a demand. The bene-

Just A Spirit

The result is that what you have here is essentially not a government at all: it is a Spirit of Government—a Spirit based on interaction between authoritarian and benevolent administration and independent and demanding students; a Spirit which can be examined in proper perspective only after one question is re-

solved: the question of Justice and Justification: Is the administration-student relationship going to be based on an Ethic or is it going to revolve around relative Power?

This question of justice and ethic as the basis of government has always been an historical issue and is a crucial question in our own day.

Obviously the idea of Justice as the basis of government potentially lacks the efficiency of totalitarianism and implies the ineffectiveness of democracy.

Authority and Independence

But JUSTICE is the only way in which men and authority can be simultaneously and mutually dignifying and beneficial. Both administration and students must concede that authority and independence have an ethic.

The Great Fault is that this hasn't been the case. Obvious example: the Campanile: The administration arbitrarily and without warning decided to censor the yearbook and alter its delivery policy; then a week later, it announces that all student publications' blanket tax receipts will be channeled through the Student Senate, thus giving the government the right to demand editing and the fiscal power to enforce its demand.

Why the inverted order of these actions? Why not try student rationality first? The empty triumph of Power precludes the potential real victory of Ethic.

The problem at hand—the Campanile. The problem at heart — Justification and Student Government. The problem resolved — only by an administration and student return to the "Spirit of Rice."