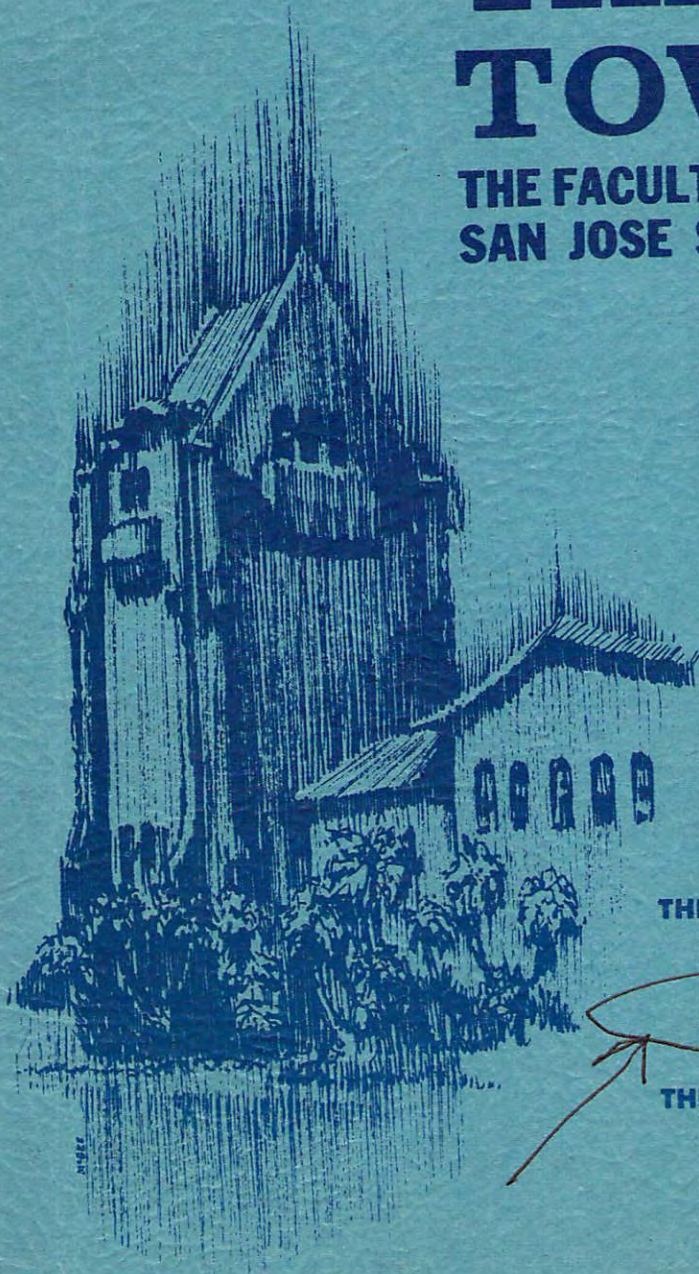


# THE TOWER

THE FACULTY MAGAZINE OF  
SAN JOSE STATE COLLEGE



**THE SNOW-LEAVIS CONTROVERSY**  
by Pres. Robert D. Clark

**DEBATE ON "THE TOWER LIST"**

**THE LATEST ON LOYALTY OATHS**  
by Theodore M. Norton

Articles by James Brown,  
Marvin E. Lee, and others

FALL, 1964  
Price: 50c

This is the second issue of a still-fledgling enterprise--a magazine devoted to the interests of this campus community, supported by contributions from four faculty organizations and by "free offerings" from especially philanthropic readers and well-wishers.

Last year the campus chapters of AAUP, ACSCP, and AFT jointly underwrote the costs of the first issue. Response was enthusiastic enough to warrant a second issue, and CTA joined the sponsoring organizations. The editors plan No. 3 for the spring semester, if financing can be arranged.

Meanwhile, in keeping with the policy set by the founding fathers of THE TOWER, we have attempted no control over the content or format of the magazine. We are grateful for the efforts of the editors; praise or blame are theirs alone.

Signed:

Charles M. Larsen, Mathematics  
AAUP

Theodore M. Norton, Political Science  
ACSCP

John G. Sperling, Humanities  
AFT

Harold H. Hailer, Education  
CTA

NOTE: Since THE TOWER's first issue last Spring, there have been some inquiries about the magazine's beginnings and its prospects for its future. The following information may answer some of the questions.

In the fall of 1963 representatives of the five faculty campus organizations met at the instigation of Frederic A. Weed, Political Science, to discuss the possibilities for financing and publishing a campus faculty publication. Three organizations, the AAUP (John A. Barr, Education, 1963-64 President), the ACSCP (Weed, 1963-64 President), and AFT (Edward J. Laurie, Business, 1963-64 President) agreed on initial financing. The three presidents appointed the present slate of editors. The CTA has now joined the other three organizations in underwriting the publication.

Financing then, as now, is based loosely upon each organization's ability to pay. The arrangements for financing are made separately for each issue, so those responsible for the magazine in the literal sense can hope to plan only the next issue. Needless to say, we are grateful for the backing of the four organizations and we hope that the magazine will merit and will draw continued support from them.

--The Editors

## THE TOWER LIST DEBATE

(Last spring, the members of the men's honorary scholastic fraternity, Tau Delta Phi, published a booklet, the Tower List, which contained student ratings of teachers. Almost an immediate sell-out, the List was much argued over--and much sought after--by both the raters and the rated. By fall, the Academic Council had been asked to stop further publication, partially on the grounds that some of the statements about faculty were libelous. The debate continues, as, undaunted, the fraternity members plan a second, more up-to-date edition. On October 16 of this year, this magazine sponsored the taping of a three-hour session of the student-faculty Friday forum, whose topic was the Tower List. Excerpts follow from some of the most interesting comments made that evening. THE TOWER wishes to thank Dr. Richard G. Tansey, professor of art and informal advisor to the Friday forum; Gene Lokey, student coordinator of the forum; Dr. Walter T. Plant, professor of psychology and moderator for the evening; and all the panel members for their cooperation. Members of the campus community who have not yet attended one of these semi-regular Friday sessions will perhaps realize, on reading the following, that they have been missing a worthwhile tradition-in-the-making.)

LAWRENCE GOODING (Senior and President of the men's honorary scholastic fraternity, Tau Delta Phi): The Tower List was compiled by the members of Tau Delta Phi in order to sort of codify the grapevine for the students and to give the professors a gentle nudge that might assist them in their teaching. The ratings represent an average of student opinion and should be taken as such. As with any average, there are some that were very high and some that dropped low. Therefore, you cannot take anything that is in the Tower List as gospel. We tried to make this explicitly clear when we presented it. The responses are, we feel, as valid as the grapevine and probably more so since they generally represent a wider sampling, although we don't claim a valid and complete sample. They present views that a transfer or new student who doesn't have access to the grapevine wouldn't be able to get. They should be valued as no more or no less than you would value the comment of an acquaintance who told you, "Well, that professor's class is kind of a gas but he never sticks to the subject." . . . The Tower List is going to be published again. This year we're going to IBM. It's going to be extensively sampled. Last year we had 20,000 sampling sheets out. We got back 4,600. Next time we hope to have even more out and because of the publicity and notoriety, we hope to get possibly even a 50 per cent return.

JACK PIERCE (Assistant Professor of Anthropology): I would like to say a couple of words about the matter of whether or not Tau Delta Phi ought to have undertaken this task. It boils down to the question of whether or not the students shall have the freedom to undertake any kind of activity that falls within the bounds of legality, on the one hand, and good taste on the other. So far as I am concerned the Tower

List as a whole falls on the right side of both those questions. There were particular statements made about individual faculty members, which I regarded--on the basis of what limited knowledge one faculty member ever has about another faculty member--as probably not true. I found some of them to be most objectionable in the way that they were stated. Nonetheless, my belief is that what the students are attempting is all to the good. The idea of rating the instructors may help improve what goes on in the classroom.

ALBERT PORTER (Associate Professor of Business): James Bryant Conant, in his recent book, The Education of American Teachers, says, "I have long been convinced that higher education is far too important to be left exclusively to professors." And our current Chancellor Glenn Dumke, in an interview of about a year ago, said, among other things, "I wish that the faculty of a state college would be as concerned about the professional standards of scholarship of its members as they are about the length of the tenure period and salaries." . . .

This list has had an enormous impact whose reverberations will go far beyond this campus, because it is some evidence that students do want a quality education and this comes as a tremendous shock to many people who assume that this is not the case at all.

As far as the ratings go, to me they seemed very perceptive. My chief criticism is that there was no opportunity for a rejoinder or even a warning in advance to the professors, particularly those who received uncomplimentary ratings. I think that even as bureaucratic as the United States Navy is, you are always shown and asked to sign, an unfavorable fitness report with an opportunity for a rejoinder. Our general feeling of legal right in this country indicates that a person perhaps shouldn't be judged before being heard.

SNELL PUTNEY (Associate Professor of Sociology): I had contact with Tau Delta Phi in various capacities at the time the list was being produced. Unlike the rest of the faculty I can't plead ignorance and surprise. I have heard some charges bandied that I know are very palpably false; charges that the members of Tower were callous or indifferent or flippant in their approach to this. I watched these guys working and sweating many, many hours in the production of this thing. My own feeling toward the list is that it has many defects. This is obvious. There are some things that I argued about at the time it was being done, but the membership thought otherwise. I also think that they did the right thing in going ahead and doing it in the way that they wanted. This is a student product.

It seems to me there are two approaches that can be taken to the list. One of them is to say that this is a bad thing which these boys did. They should not have done it. The whole project is morally wrong or impossible or unwise. The fraternity and the faculty advisor should line up before the administration and cut their throats in

an act of penance. The other approach is to say this was an interesting thing that they tried. How can it be improved? And this is the stand that I would take. We intend to bring out another issue. I intend to yell about some of the same things I yelled about last time and probably some new things. I hope the next one will be better.

One final thing: I've heard so much about the unfairness of the list and much of it is true. But I've heard so little about the unfairness of grades. Every semester I play God and I rate two or three hundred students and they have a very minimal capacity to defend themselves against my ratings. The student is relatively helpless. I am much more concerned, in my own moral code, with protecting the rights of students and then very secondarily, with protecting the rights of faculty members which really are better protected anyway. We have even some organization. If the list in some way impinged upon the rights of faculty, I'm not sure this should be regarded as tragic. The student also has a right, particularly in a large college, to inform himself in the best way he can in the attempt to get a good education. The list, for all its defects, may have made a contribution to achieving this student right.

CURTIS STAFFORD (Professor of Education; Testing Officer): I tried to examine the Tower List as I would any research project turned in to me that I would score and give a grade. Perhaps, in keeping with the terminology of the list, I would recommend it for some. Now, there are certain weaknesses in the design which obviously will affect the validity of the report. There were some ways that the Tower boys could have gotten around this, but not without even more work than they did put in on this. But there is one thing that I have believed right from the start and that is in the honesty of the motives of Tau Delta Phi. I never questioned this at all.

I asked my students in a graduate research seminar to criticize the methodology as well as the data-gathering instrument itself. Well, of course, the very first thing they shouted at was the sampling procedure. If you want to know how I got my evaluation sheets to pass around the class, I had one of our secretaries walk up to the table just to see if she could get one. And she got ten. And the next day she got ten more. I must have had 60 or 70 of these around the office. This was the first thing that bothered me--that they were so easily available.

There's been a lot said about the sampling and I've been building a case against it. But at least on the score of representing the faculty as a group, I think I'd have to testify that the list passes.

Now, I have one other thing. I was awaiting the published list very anxiously because I was looking for a history instructor named Snelling who obviously does a very good job of teaching History 17A. Of course, the only problem is there is no instructor named Snelling at this institution, but my wife and secretaries in the

testing office and a number of other people had an awful lot of fun filling out evaluation sheets for Snelling. Well, the boys found this.

On the matter of individual reliability, I don't know. I scratch my head. I suppose in some cases, these may be accurate descriptions of my colleagues, both good and bad. I am, as a person interested in research as are other colleagues at the table, I know, bothered by studies where the  $n$ , the median  $n$  is 8. The first quartile or third, however you take it, is 5 and the opposite is 11. 5, 8 and 11 represent the range. These are not awfully large  $n$ 's. They may remind Mr. Plant of the famous psychology student - one third of his rats gained weight, one third of his rats lost weight, and the other one ran away.

I did have a genuine worry, that maybe there is some one student that did elect to knife an instructor because of a sour experience. Now, there is no way in the world that an instructor can prove that this happened nor is there any way in the world Tau Delta Phi can prove that it didn't.

One last point is that the invalidating of these results would permit the instructor who really deserves a poor rating to excuse himself. And I don't want to see that either.

GOODING: In answer to some of the questions raised by Dr. Stafford: the sampling technique was crude, to say the least. In order to sample students, we could have gone and done as the student government did in the Union survey and gotten a cross-section of all the students on campus and gotten each of them to fill out a report on the professors. But, unfortunately, we don't have the resources and the manpower that the student government has and so we had to go to the booth method. This left us wide open to dishonesty on the part of the students by getting ten forms and stabbing the instructor and even for the instructor to stack his reports.

So far, we're open to suggestions. The best idea we've gotten so far is that an individual Tau Delta member will go into a professor's class with the permission of the professor, distribute the IBM forms to the students in the class and leave them at their leisure to fill out. They will not fill it out on the professor whose class we went into, they will fill it out on the professor they had the previous semester and the semester before. We did this for a reason. We felt there is some pressure on a student when he is filling in a form on one of his current professors. The movement to a year back gives a student a chance to mellow his views on a professor.

PIERCE: The question really has to do with how far Tau Delta Phi's responsibility goes in the presentation of this document. Every department on the campus, after the publication, had little gossipy stories running around about how this or that faculty member reacted upon receiving his terrible rating. We, all of us, know

somebody or other who went home and went to bed very ill afterwards. It must have been a virus, I guess. There is, as a matter of fact, a very distinct possibility that faculty members who take seriously their responsibilities and are very deeply involved in their teaching and who are perhaps psychologically unstable could be precipitated into a very final kind of act--perhaps suicide--as a result of such a destructive blow to the ego. What is the responsibility of Tau Delta Phi for the consequences of the ratings that they make on individual instructors?

PUTNEY: I admit the possibility and I've also known students who suicided as the result of our grading practices.

STAFFORD: As long as we're discussing grades, I suppose here there is a manner of doing that bothers me a little bit too, because just as you have had inept instructors, you realize that some of us have had inept students. But we don't write notes in The Spartan Daily and tell them how bad they are.

PIERCE: I think perhaps one of the things that has bugged the faculty more than anything else about the list has to do with the very great difference that exists between teaching a lower-division introductory course and an advanced course or a graduate course. There are some of us who are especially capable of handling lower-division humor, and jollying it up in the classroom and who can therefore get good ratings from large numbers of lower-division students. Some are perhaps not so adept at this, but happen to be very successful in dealing with the more advanced courses in their discipline; others are superb on the graduate level, but as teachers in the undergraduate level in any kind of course are a bust. I think that it must be taken into account when you evaluate an over-all rating that this represents a compound of many different types of teaching situations.

STAFFORD: I'd like to mention a few particular statistics here. You know what the expert is, don't you? This is the one who assiduously avoids the small errors as he swoops to the grand fallacy. So, with that preface: I look at the questionnaire itself and I see the item, "Are the lectures interesting?" Now, we've been talking about teachers; we've been talking a little bit about students. But we haven't talked too much about students and teachers or the interaction between students and teachers. Part of the thing in an instructor is what he perceives his class wants him to be and then he decides whether he will be that or not. And even a hundred per cent accurate sampling will not take care of this problem. We get a hundred per cent return on the instrument, but we are still hamstrung on the instrument itself. The "worm turns" is a rating sheet made up by the faculty and as such reflects the faculty bias. You see, you get a good warm feeling about yourself when you get this back from the classroom because you know when you've asked this kind of question, there's only one kind of answer you can get back. This Tower List's instrument, on the other hand, is one conceived by the students and is, therefore, asking the questions that the students want to know about faculty. What are the first

two items on the questionnaire? They deal with lectures, so you see, it isn't just that nasty old administration, Dr. Porter, that is fixated on the out-moded lecture system. Our nasty old students want this too. I've gone into classes where I have absolutely stayed away from a lecturing role. You've never seen such hostility in your life because I wasn't playing the role of the professor in telling them what the word was. Now, as long as we have an instrument that is emphasizing things such as interesting lectures, we aren't going to find out anything about other effective teaching styles. Now, look, the instrument isn't all bad, because I happen to believe that it is important to find out: "Is he interested in the student and willing to respect and help him?" But the questionnaire emphasizes lectures and the amount of work and such.

ARTHUR H. ROGERS (Assistant Professor Psychology; Personnel Counselor): The students, I think, would like to know more about the matter of class style which has been under-reported. For example, the Berkeley faculty rating catalogue has remarks like: "He leads discussions rather than lectures, but people have complained about the course because the students are dull." (LAUGHTER)

RICHARD W. STAVELEY (Associate Professor of Political Science): The thing that bothers me is that there's been all this talk about sampling, especially by Dr. Stafford here, which indicates that this kind of sampling could ever be reliable. Now, I'm one of these old-fashioned people that don't believe that statistics can tell you anything at all about the quality of anything. I believe that you can't ever, by mathematical analyses or strictly scientific pursuits, say anything worthwhile about the quality of things. Now I don't think this list sets out to be anything other than hearsay. This was what was indicated tonight by the spokesman for the list. It is only opinion and I think that the consensus of those of us who read it is that it is good opinion. But, because the students are not in a position to know what the teacher knows, because the teacher has certain credentials, experience, and other things, the student's evaluation of the competence of the teacher with respect to his knowledge of his subject-matter can never be anything more than opinion. So, I would confine myself to saying this, that all this nice garbage about the possibility of this becoming a scientific study is itself garbage. It is and can be no more than opinion, which most of us think is rather reliable opinion, and we ought to let it go at that.

WALTER T. PLANT (Professor of Psychology; Moderator): Let me suggest the following: It is indeed the case that this is nothing but a compilation of opinion; the concern is what is made of it and I submit that I would rather make judgment on the basis of no information than poor information. I submit that the sampling problem does indeed loom as the most important technical criticism that can be made. But the real sampling problem is not one of determining how many students the professor teaches in a period of time and seeing that the proportional number of former students are represented in a sample. The really woolly problem centers



around what are the differences between individuals who choose voluntarily to go to the trouble of seeking and responding to these questionnaires as opposed to those who have theoretically the same opportunity but who do not choose to do this. Let me put it another way. My three former department heads have all independently said this kind of thing: "I don't know what significance to attach to student comment when they take the trouble to come in and say to me, 'Professor Blotz is no damn good' or 'Professor Blotz is the most exciting guy I have ever had any experience with,' because what turns out is that about 2 per cent probably of the students go to this trouble. My former department heads are all impressed with this as being a biased sample. The bias matter, I should like to point out, has not been mentioned. We've talked about proportional representation and so on. But the real issue centers around the differences between the person who will take the time and who does fill out a form, as opposed to the person who does not.

**STAVELEY:** Take this example: I believe that one of the categories was whether or not the teacher was an easy grader. Did Dr. Stafford's research class come to any correlations between those with high grade-point averages and respondents who had teachers who were judged to be easy graders? This, you see, would be crucial-- whether the student has himself got any merit or whether he himself just goes into classes whose instructors are evaluated as easy graders. Statistics don't deal with questions of merit; these are questions of quality which quantitative analyses, mathematics, science cannot deal with.

**STAFFORD:** I'm not sure whether I'm supporting or attacking the list right now, but I want to try to have us distinguish between indicting statistics and the statistical method because the numbers don't mean something and the ineptness of the researcher who contrives the measures and does a poor job of contriving them. It is said that there are liars, damn liars, and statisticians. I don't know, as I am a statistician. But I do have a respect for a number and that it is just a number and that the thing that is more important is the meaning behind the number, the psychological concept, if you will. So, I want to try to be very, very careful as I look at any number that's reporting any complex human behavior and I'm not going to over-interpret that 2.4 is more than 2.3, or what have you.

In making a concluding statement, I am pleased that there has not come up this evening the point of whether or not the list should be prohibited. It speaks well for our campus and its student body that this has not been the topic tonight. As far as communicating to the poor green freshman who walks in, knowing nothing about the grapevine, if he depends completely upon this list for information for making his decisions, then he deserves anything he gets. I don't think we should have to protect the student body from the Tower List if it's bad, because in so doing we are saying, "You are immature. You are incapable of judging, of making decisions." I'm not going to fall into the trap of feeling either that we should protect students or that we should protect the faculty. #####