

# Right for the wrong reason

Dear Sir:

There are, in this world, few things I find more annoying than to hear someone take a position with which I wholeheartedly concur, and then defend it for the very worst reasons. I am afraid that such has been the case in last week's editorial.

That the dispensation of honor trials be delegated to an autonomous body for which such matters should be the sole concern, I would be the last to take issue. The present structure of student government here provides more than enough for E.C. members to do. In fact, I think it most likely that many might find considerable relief in not having their already cluttered days and nights encumbered by the Burdens of honor trials.

But, both you, Mr. Editor, and the Student Association for Black Unity, have missed the point, and you have missed the point in a manner signal of the decline and fall of the honor system at this university. To read page thirteen of the present catalogue, one must surely conclude that Camelot lives, and the university regularly enrolls almost seventeen hundred Knights of the Round Table. We are none of us so foolish (I hope) as to imagine that such a thing is true. Possessions simply are not always right where he forgot them, and the word of a W&L student is not always respected, even within the institution. The honor system is not what it was, even Camelot fades, but undeniably, we at Washington and Lee enjoy a measure of trust and freedom not available in the vast majority of this nation's places of higher education. The fact that anyone may wander through the stacks of the library, that the Co-op is not equipped with parabolic anti-shoplifting mirrors, and that we actually may schedule our exams at our convenience, are rights well worth some thought, and some jealous protection.

I say jealous protection, because unless the students, not administration, faculty, or staff, or even the risen spirit of General Lee, are having a constant and ongoing love affair with honor, this system must surely fail. You, Mr. Editor, and you, members of S.A.B.U., but not you alone, are in love, not with honor, but the trappings of a penal system that has nothing to do with honor.

Any society makes a choice as regards honor; will it, or will it not tolerate the presence of the

dishonorable in its midst. At Washington and Lee, the choice not to was made some time ago, and it is known as the absolute penalty. Anything less, any graduated penalty, any second chance, is tantamount to an admission that we will tolerate a lack of honor. The rules of the E.C. as regards an honor trial exists then with one, and quite properly only one, purpose, to determine whether or not the individual on trial had made a decision to conduct himself with out honor. Any other concern with procedure, rules, and regulations, is not only irrelevant, but patently dangerous to the survival of honor here. The answer is an honor trial is not always clear or easy, but the question is eternal and simple, and it must be the **only** question for the system to work.

It would be a mistake to think that I am an apologist for the E.C. I have as little use for most of its members as I have for our thirty-seventh U.S. President, and convincing me of their tendency to bend their own rules to suit their purposes would be ease itself. Again, however, the only question here is whether or not a student has committed an honor violation. If a student is of the opinion that irregular means were used to convict him of something he knows he did not do, he has the option of public appeal, where irregularities may be subjected to the scrutiny of all his peers. But if a student is guilty, that is, all there is to it, and he should and must leave.

I have heard no one protest Raynard Scott's innocence. I cannot pass judgement, I do not have the evidence. If he has done nothing, let this come to light, and I will do everything in my power to support him, for the dismissal of an innocent man is less tolerable to me than no honor system at all. If the E.C. has conducted itself without honor, perhaps the parties aware of this should initiate honor proceedings against these offenders. But, if Mr. Scott has done what was less than honorable, let us not cry "Procedure!" or "Discrimination!" Let us live here, Mr. Editor, members of S.A.B.U., and all others pleased to call themselves Washington and Lee students, for the truth, not for the channels created to find it, and sometimes perverted to hide it.

Respectfully,  
Wm. D. Cantler '77