

courses. Leaf's absence, however, heralded a new wave of unpopularity for the core.

In retrospect, Leaf thinks, "I should never have allowed the new curriculum to start until I had worked out the elective program as thoroughly as I could. All our efforts were spent putting out the brushfires in the core—such as placing 15th in pharmacology." Leaf calls the present unstructured-elective offerings "a frivolous berry-picking operation."

Nevertheless, Leaf remembers that before he left Boston for a year at Oxford, "The preclinical council said it was delighted" with his proposal for organizing elective tracks. "I thought I had gotten this idea across. But it just never went any farther." After Leaf's 6-year chairmanship, David G. Freiman, professor of pathology, became the Curriculum Committee chairman. Leaf feels that Freiman "had the serious intent of holding on to what

was good in the curriculum, but structuring it so it was more palatable to preclinical faculty, and so they wouldn't feel so disenfranchised."

Thus, the most persuasive reason for returning to semester teaching and department courses is to console the many basic science professors who, as Freiman observes, are "terribly unhappy."

It would be a mistake to assume that the abolition of the core curriculum will mean a strict return to the traditional curriculum. The core's most important legacy—a tripling or quadrupling of elective time in the third and fourth years—will definitely survive. In addition, the rescheduling of courses along a semester basis instead of a 2- to 6-week period of time solely devoted to a particular organ system, will allow students the flexibility of taking related courses elsewhere in the university.

Nevertheless, proponents of the se-

mester system have made too many optimistic predictions. They insist that a semester system will induce more student-faculty contact, more outside reading, more hours studying, and prevent a student from falling as far behind in his work as he can now under the core. But these problems, which those who champion the semester system claim they can solve, have much deeper roots than the structural set-up of the core curriculum. At the Yale School of Medicine which has the semester system, professors complain that the two most serious problems are that there is too little student-faculty contact and that the student relies too much on the syllabus, with insufficient outside reading.

But these arguments for a semester system draw attention away from the one overriding reason for dissolving the core—the unwillingness and unhappiness of the basic science faculty to relinquish its traditional teaching along

## Briefing

### A Union for Industrial Scientists?

For the first time in at least 30 years, a major union is attempting to organize the estimated 200,000 scientists and engineers in the U.S. and Canadian petroleum, chemical, and atomic industries. The AFL-CIO's Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers International Union (OCAW), which already represents nearly 180,000 blue-collar workers in those industries, last month moved to capitalize on the discontent of industrial research personnel by establishing a professional employees division. The new division, headed by chemist Frank Collins, a longtime union advocate now on leave from Polytechnic Institute of Brooklyn, New York, launched its organization drive in Chicago at the end of August during the 166th national meeting of the American Chemical Society. Despite warm endorsements by Nobel Prize-winning chemists Harold Urey, Linus Pauling, and Salvador Luria, the union's efforts have so far met a surprising apathy.

OCAW obviously expected more of the ACS and its members. ACS president Alan C. Nixon and president-elect Bernard Friedman were both swept into

office as write-in candidates espousing a platform of job security and a fairer treatment of industrial chemists. Both have devoted much of their tenure to such activities as reformulation of employment guidelines, providing irrevocable pensions, and, in general, enhancing the professionalism of chemists. Yet the society has been curiously non-committal about the union's efforts, despite the similarity of goals.

The ACS has issued no public statement about the unionization attempt, and there was no open discussion of it during the national meeting. Nixon's own attitude was lukewarm at best: he argued privately that it would be inappropriate for the society to support the unionization effort, particularly since many ACS members are part of the chemical industry's management, but that there was also no reason to condemn the effort. Nonetheless, some subtle forms of resistance were apparent.

An OCAW request for table space at the meeting was denied by ACS, and the union was forced to rent space at the concurrent National Chemical Exposition. The ACS council also unexpectedly elevated the society's own division of professional relations to full divisional status—without even notifying the division's president that a vote might be imminent. Some ACS staff

members predicted that official resistance would stiffen notably if the organization drive began to meet with success.

The ACS members, for their part, have offered vocal support for professionalism, but little else. The society's professional relations division has garnered only about 450 members, and attendance at its symposiums was sparse. Nixon's high-powered solicitation of funds for his Professional Enhancement Program has also fallen far short of its goal. The union seems to be doing little better. The volume of people visiting the OCAW booth was modest, at best, and only eight people showed up for a cocktail hour hosted by Collins.

Collins attributes this apparent apathy to a "climate of fear" in the chemical industry, arguing that most prospective members are afraid association with the fledgling union will cost them their jobs. Other observers suggest, however, that the true reason is the relative prosperity of the chemical industry and the greater job security associated with that prosperity. Only a full-scale recession, they argue, would drive professional chemists and chemical engineers into the arms of a union and such a recession—at least for the chemical industry—is unlikely in the foreseeable future.—T.H.M.

departmental lines. These departments feel if they do not have a course of their own, their reason for existing at a medical school must be necessarily questioned. Thus the guiding principles at Harvard, other universities, and undoubtedly any large organization must revolve around the politics of happiness.

Leaf criticizes the politics of happiness, which caused the downfall of the core curriculum he developed. "To set up a system that's impossible to change, all somebody has to do is vow he's going to be very unhappy if he has to teach another way," Leaf says. His solution is to "pick a few people and bypass the others." Leaf points out a very real danger when he warns that a return to departmental teaching as it used to be will make it "very difficult to reduce the amount of information each department insists you need to know. Medical school will become 4 years stuffed full of didactic exercises."

The return to grades may also be a mistake. Many students believe the faculty simply does not know the extent to which academic competition has increased since the days it went to college. With three applicants for every medical school seat in the country, competition for grades in college (*Science*, 28 July 1972) has made the theft of an afternoon's work in an organic chemistry laboratory nothing unusual. The fact that college course work in science is usually graded on a curve has made many premedical students unwilling to help each other master scientific concepts. False information deliberately released at the breakfast table on the morning of a college exam in a premedical course is not unusual, either. The pass/fail system, although it does not eliminate a subtle undercurrent of competition (partly because there are persistent rumors about secret grades), does create a spirit in which students are much more willing to help

each other. An ungraded system promotes an atmosphere of partnership, rather than one of jealous competition. Revisionism at Harvard is not an isolated case. At Yale, which has had no grading system for at least four decades, changes are under way as well (see box). But Harvard and Yale both seem to be following a course that is somewhat different from that state medical schools are taking.

The original intention of writing about Yale was to contrast Yale's continued liberal approach to education, specifically the no-exam and no-grades policies, with Harvard's reversal of its radical curricular reforms of the late 1960's. What was found, instead, is that the Yale system is in serious trouble, although it had functioned smoothly for more than a generation.

Among schools like Yale and Harvard, there appears to be a strong trend toward retrenchment and reinstating the traditional educational system. Namely,

## Briefing

### Environmental Precedent for Nixon Tapes Case

A major achievement of the public-interest law movement is that by its persistent demands to know the basis for actions taken on the public's behalf, it has opened up considerably the process of government decision-making. That the importance of this achievement extends far beyond the immediate battles the movement has won or lost was shown last week by Judge John J. Sirica's ruling on the issue of whether President Nixon should hand over the tape recordings demanded by the Watergate special prosecutor. The most recent—and in some ways the most germane—of the five precedents cited in Sirica's opinion is the case of the *Committee for Nuclear Responsibility Incl. v Seaborg*, in which a coalition of eight environmental groups attempted to block the AEC from detonating a nuclear warhead beneath the Aleutian island of Amchitka.

The environmentalists fought their case up to the Supreme Court where, 4½ hours before the warhead was due to be armed, the Court voted by 4 to 3 against them. Though the case was lost, some case law was made along

the way which is remarkably analogous to the situation of Nixon and the tapes. To support their contention that the Amchitka detonation was unsafe, the environmentalists demanded to see certain documents allegedly critical of the test, but the AEC claimed the documents involved national security matters and were covered by executive privilege.

The District Court decided the issue in the same way as Sirica decided that of the tapes, by ordering the defendants to produce the documents for in camera inspection by the court, which itself would decide what was privileged and what was not. The AEC appealed but the Court of Appeals under Chief Judge Bazelon ruled that the lower court's order should stand. "In our view," said Bazelon and his confrères in the opinion cited by Sirica last week, "this claim of absolute immunity for documents in possession of an executive department or agency, upon the bald assertion of its head, is not sound law." As for the government's appeal to the doctrine of the separation of powers, that it lies with the executive branch to decide what documents it will produce, the appeals court replied:

"Any claim to executive absolutism cannot override the duty of the court to assure that an official has not ex-

ceeded his charter or flouted the legislative will. . . . No executive official or agency can be given absolute authority to determine what documents in his possession may be considered by the court in its task. Otherwise the head of an executive department would have the power on his own say so to cover up all evidence of fraud and corruption when a federal court or grand jury was investigating malfeasance in office, and this is not the law."

Nixon's case for refusing to give up the tapes is so far traveling the same route as that of the AEC's attempt to suppress the environmental impact documents. David Sive, the New York attorney who argued the environmentalists' case through to the Supreme Court, believes the two cases involve the same issues and will have precisely the same result. The procedure for in camera inspection, which does not seem to have been used before as a test for executive privilege, was one that Sive suggested to the court as soon as the AEC started talking about military secrets.

When the Amchitka bomb went off with minimal damage to wildlife, the epic struggle to prevent it was held by some to have been a waste of effort. In terms of legal history the case is proving of some import.

—N.W.