

# English Professor Criticizes Colleagues

## Dr. Sledd Contends Many Instructors Shirk Teaching Duties

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Texan Staff Writers

"The arrogant self-indulgence of the UT-Austin faculty is beyond belief."

That terse statement is not the personal opinion of a disgruntled student recently ejected from a school he could not keep pace with. It comes from deep within the hallowed halls of the school itself.

Dr. James Sledd, professor of English, has waged a protracted struggle to get professors in his department, and beyond, to leave their research and upper-division courses and introduce themselves to freshmen — by teaching introductory courses.

**SLEDD MAINTAINS** University teaching assistants are grossly overburdened with graduate courses and teaching duties. He also believes their situation cannot be eased until older professors assume some of the teaching load TAs are now carrying.

A teaching assistant's union was formed Wednesday on campus. Teaching assistant Mike Rush explained to reporters TAs suffer from "a double burden. In order to do our work better we need to have a more realistic workload," he said. The statement was seen by some observers as lending credence to charges Sledd has made for years. It also seemed to serve notice, they say, the problem is Universitywide and not confined to Parlin Hall.

Frank Erwin, former regent and current University lobbyist in the Legislature, charged in recent years that professors are shirking their

teaching duties at the University and passing that work on to teaching assistants at the expense of worker and student.

**THE LEGISLATURE** enacted a bill pursuant to that complaint in 1971 which called for a minimum of four courses per semester to be taught by regular faculty members. A slightly moderated load was included for professors over 60.

The Legislature provided for extenuating circumstances, however, by allowing professors in some instances to substitute committee work and certain other academic tasks for teaching. In addition, a regental ruling appended to the already existing statutory loophole allowed chairmen and college deans to establish criteria for equivalency. That meant the legislation, under certain conditions, could easily be ignored.

The Legislature, advised of the situation, may yet strike

the equivalency proviso from the statute.

**MEANWHILE, SLEDD** contends since upper-division enrollment in the English department has declined 43 per cent in the last five years, an excess of manpower exists.

With that fact in mind, Sledd argues teaching assistants are not needed so heavily for introductory courses since seasoned faculty members are available for duty.

Sledd suggests, too, that an assumption that professors are needed in upper-division courses is a misguided value judgment.

**IN A WRITTEN** response to questions submitted by The Texan, Sledd said, "You must not assume that 'very specialized courses' are more important than teaching the mass of students to read and write at college level."

Sledd, who is 61 and admits he would not take the moderated teaching load, was asked how he felt professors

would react to being told they would have to teach courses they had no interest in. Sledd's no-nonsense reply did not waver from his professed dedication to seeing professors back in lower-division classrooms and teaching assistants relieved of some duties.

"Your question makes no sense without the assumption that the State of Texas is obliged to pay professors' salaries but forbidden to assign professors' duties.

**"IF A MAN** isn't interested in doing his unit's most important job, he has no place in that unit. Firemen who aren't interested in fighting fires aren't paid high salaries by the fire departments."

Sledd further alleges that the University uses fraudulent graduate courses, which represent no real instruction, to inflate graduate school enrollment, entitling the school to more state money. Sledd said state money is allocated according to

registration figures.

**"DO YOU THINK** Speaker Clayton will be pleased to know that graduate professors have actually defended giving credit for bogus graduate courses?" Sledd wrote. Included in the remarks were minutes from a faculty meeting in which one faculty member did admit fraudulent courses had been used to circumvent "bad regulations."

Defending teaching assistants, Sledd said, "Why do the faculty and The Texan not emphasize the Department of English now has 157 graduate students who are also teaching English courses — that the University pays those students for a 24-hour work week, but that the English department makes many of them work more than 30 hours?" In addition to teaching, graduate students are required to take at least nine hours in school.

Sledd charged the department's upper echelon professors "reserve courses like E 603" which is reserved for Plan II students. Plan II is an honors program for University students, and Sledd described it as a "sugarplum" for teachers.

**IN CONTRAST**, other faculty members have shown contempt for beginning composition. One member described his feelings for the course as "deep-seated detestation" while another was less formal. "Composition stinks," he said.

**"THE LONG** and the short of it is that it is economically cheaper to pay teaching assistants than full professors, and the administration just does not give us the money," Abrahams said. He said it was also reprehensible that the University does not even give money for the TAs until the last possible moment, which thrusts them into courses they are not prepared to teach.

**ENGLISH DEPARTMENT** Chariman Roger Abrahams, reached at his home late Wednesday, said the issue is not a new one and has been reported in The Daily Texan year after year.

Abrahams said Sledd was correct on many points but indicated the problems are not substantive ones warranting a bitter fight.

## Senate Loans Funds to Co-op

The Student Senate unanimously approved a \$5,000 no interest loan for six years to the West Campus Co-operative Food Store at a Wednesday night meeting.

A recent survey showed that 78 per cent of the students favored a co-op food store west of campus. About one month ago a group of students began organizing it.

The Senate approved the loan which is to be paid back in \$1,000 installments beginning two years after its approval. The amount of interest lost will amount to \$1,367.45.

In other business, the Senate refused by a vote of 18-11 a proposal that would have given Black Print, a black student-oriented newspaper, \$3,205.75 to publish for five years.

Last year the Senate appropriated enough money to allow Black Print to publish its first issues. Some senators felt the publication had been given its chance, and failed. The opposition argued there is a need for a minority perspective on campus.

After a lengthy discussion the decision to withhold the money came. However, the Senate passed a new resolution to lobby for more participation of black students on The Daily Texan.

Other business included passage of a resolution which would support Propositions 1 through 8 and 10 of Austin's Capital Improvements Program and reject Propositions 11 and 12, in the Saturday bond election.

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