

is the only thing society needs to legislate against. Instead of casuistically exploring this generalization, this thinksheet limits itself to one case of current local (Cape Cod) uproar, viz, a public-school teacher accused of sexual seduction of some of his pupils.

1. But first let me assert that my generalization can stand up to all challenges. In defense, all I need do is to expand "pleasure" so as to engulf the objection. This, indeed, is what is done vis-a-vis pleasure/pain in philosophy, law, and psychology: I'm not being Alice-in-Wonderland's-caterpillar facetious.

2. If pleasure were an unalloyed good, as pop hedonism says it is, we'd need no laws against it. The up side of pleasure needs no defense; but in a permissive culture like that of 1986 USA, the down side needs more attention than it's getting. Taboo, custom, law, individual and communal conscience and "standards" all take the down side seriously. Yes, sometimes too seriously; now, not seriously enough--eg, recreational drugs, which (rightly said Castro in his 2½<sup>hour</sup> speech yesterday, 28July86) are now rotting American society at all so-called levels. The drug-high pleasure has so spread that drug-control laws, though once possibly adequate, are now too weak. What to do? Increase the pain level of drug dealers up beyond the pleasure level of their gain. How high the pain level? I think beyond the ability to experience any pleasure at all--viz, capital punishment. But few of my friends would think the situation that serious; some of them are ideologically unable to believe the situation that serious: they are absolutists in opposing capital punishment.

Now THE CASE, argued three ways on CCT's ed p. today (29July86):

## Teacher-student story, editorial were 'irresponsible'

Although we have often disagreed among ourselves in the past, the Harwich School Committee is unanimous in our agreement that your July 24 editorial concerning the alleged sexual misconduct of a Harwich teacher was inflammatory and irresponsible journalism.

The articles in this issue were filled with rumors, hearsay and innuendo and, on the basis of this information, you wrote an editorial that would have approached being libelous if not concerned with public officials. Further, it bordered on a violation of civil rights and showed a complete insensitivity to the feelings and needs of the student allegedly involved.

Your proposal that the laws of Massachusetts could use revision was well taken. But your suggestion that the Harwich School Committee might have, or should have, taken other action was completely contrary to the information presented in the accompanying articles. Indeed, had we followed your advice the results would have been exactly what you

and we would not want.

Without due process we can take no public position on the guilt or innocence of the teacher, nor should your paper. Consider, however, the following:

Assuming the teacher was guilty, and we were unable to obtain the evidence to support dismissal, he would still be teaching in Harwich and able to obtain a position elsewhere. Even had we been able to substantiate the charges, your own findings suggest that, since no law was violated, we would not have been able to sustain a dismissal. Again, he would have retained his certification as a teacher and still be teaching in Harwich. What message would this have sent to the teachers, students and parents -- and at what emotional cost, both present and future, to the students allegedly involved?

And what if he were, in fact, innocent? What purpose would a dismissal hearing have served? Would people -- would the Cape Cod Times -- believe it, even after

a hearing, especially considering the rumors and allegations circulating in the community?

In contrast to the above, what are the results of the school committee's action? The teacher is no longer teaching in the Harwich schools; there is no requirement that Harwich provide him with any recommendation if he seeks a position elsewhere; and the right of privacy of the student has been protected to the best ability of the school committee and the administration.

The silence of the administration and committee has been motivated by a desire to protect the privacy and confidentiality of the student allegedly involved. And this desire remains paramount. We have stated elsewhere that the actions of the school committee were based on what was legally possible and in the best interests of those for whom we are responsible. We stand on that statement.

DIANE B. MCCARTHY,  
chairman  
Harwich School Committee

OVER

## Editorial 'nailed a wrong in our permissive society'

I must agree with your editorial spanking the Harwich School Committee for its powder-puff treatment of a hammer-and-anvil issue: "By the standards of the community it serves, the Harwich board's decision was ethically and morally wrong."

How refreshing to have something nailed as "wrong" in our permissive society, in which supercilious sophisticates consider fundamentalist any right/wrong proclamations.

The two legs on which law rests are the community's moral-ethical sensitivity and the community's vision of justice — the ideal all legislation seeks to emulate. Your editorial appeals to the first in opposition to the second. The second — in this case Massachusetts law, which permits consensual sex between public-school teachers and pupils at least 16 years old — needs updating in the

light of early adolescents' lowered level of moral resistance to seduction, and the media's raised level of sexual excitation in commercial exploitation. Among the states, New York and California are leading the pack in updating legislation on this problem.

The Harwich board merely accepted the resignation. Would it have been judgmental and puritanical to dismiss and decertify? Assuming the decision of guilt, of course it would. I conclude that in some cases it's right and human to be judgmental and puritanical. And it's moral: It refuses merely to pass the problem on to the next school district, refuses to shovel one's garbage onto a neighbor's lawn.

As you imply, a lot of things are legal that are violations of ethics and of morality. Teacher-student sex is, unfortunately, legal in Massachusetts high schools merely if the student is 16 or older. This

legal weakness forces attention on the ethical and moral issues.

What does a community deserve in such cases? Primary deterrence: the termination of the teacher's contract. Secondary deterrence: the termination of the teacher's threat to other school systems. Counseling for the victims, including adequate social support.

And vengeance. I can understand why you didn't mention this, though many in Harwich feel the need for it. The word is from the Latin "to vindicate." What needs vindication is the community's ethical and moral sense. A tolerant attitude leads toward more child abuse and pupil seduction.

The punishment inflicted in retaliation must satisfy the public's demand that public decisions tilt toward decency, morality, ethics and the public good.

WILLIS ELLIOTT  
Craigville

## Whose sexual ethics, and who shall be the enforcer?

It's incredibly disturbing to see how swift some people are to pass their moral judgments on others, and even more quick to condemn without considering the consequences. I'm referring, of course, to the so-called incident which "haunts" Harwich and teacher Charles Horan's personal life.

Having been a student at Harwich High who came into contact with the highly respected and still very respectable Mr. Horan, I found the Times article of Thursday slanderous.

If, indeed, sexual ethics truly exist, whose are they and who shall be their enforcer? Why not attempt to turn back the hands of time and transform George Orwell's writings into reality?

Further, it's quite an insult to all young women to suggest we aren't in command of our own sexuality. Whether the people who feel themselves fit to judge want to accept reality or not, young women are engaging in sex with their eyes open. Further, it must remain a personal matter which

should concern only the two consenting individuals involved (i.e. those age 16 and above, as stated by law) — regardless of gaps in age and/or profession.

The immature handling of this case has cost the young adults of Harwich to lose an excellent instructor and coach. Mr. Horan's many positive contributions to Harwich High School will be sorely missed.

MARJORIE NAYLOR  
Harwich

PLEASE NOTE, among other things:

1. The 3rd letter, by a product of said school, unwittingly betrays the situation in which alleged multiple seductions occurred: "If ...sexual ethics...exist." Anomie, or what's next to it, "pluralistic" ethics (= relativism, taking refuge in situationalism). Sex for "young women" is "a personal matter," under (what else could it be?) the pleasure principle. I've no doubt (1) she's representing what this school (and her peers) taught her, or (2) that the town, which supplies that school with \$ and children, is outraged (as she is not) by highschool teacher/pupil sex.

2. The 1st letter, by the schoolboard chair, says what's "paramount" in the case is not right/wrong or the public interest but "the privacy and confidentiality of the student." This amoralistic dodge, appealing to hyperindividualism, won't wash.

3. The 2nd letter, mine, is primarily concerned about a social problem Meg Greenfield (NW 28July86) presented me with the week after I wrote this letter: "Why Nothing Is 'Wrong' Anymore."