

the mother's life.

■ 69 percent favor restrictions on abortion used as a means of birth, control.

■ 69 percent favor requiring parental consent for teenagers seeking abortion.

It was also learned that a majority either think that these restrictions are already part of existing law, or that they do not know one way or another.

The real explanation for the apparent complacency of the majority about abortion is not support for the rhetoric of "choice" or "rights." It is ignorance of the fact that, as the law now stands, abortion can be performed at any time during pregnancy for any reason.

6/12/92

David Bradshaw
Graduate student

Laycock mistakes issue

In light of chaired law professor Douglas Laycock's latest ignorant ex cathedra ver-

dict on life in the Department of English ("Departures Show Problems," *The Daily Texan*, Wednesday), I wonder not, as the Faculty Senate recently asked President Cunningham, why the School of Law pays its faculty much more than most other divisions of the University pay theirs, but if it gives them enough to do to keep their minds busy and kill time on their hands.

This question aside, Professor Laycock's letter leaves little mystery as to why he should find ratiocinative slumming in Department of English matters such a diversion. In his discipline, I'm told, you have to go to all the bother of at least pretending to consider a few facts before rendering a judgment, but when it comes to mine, apparently, you can cheerfully admit to cluelessness about the case before you ("I have no idea who was most at fault") and still render the death sentence.

From where I sit amidst the flames of Professor Laycock's righteousness, what most burns my ass, though, is not his stun-

ning arrogance, his shoddy logic or the narrowly elitist vision of meaningful professional life that drives both. What is most offensive is his letter's willful misrepresentation of the facts of academic life.

As Professor Laycock undoubtedly knows, scholars move "for all sorts of reasons" not only "from one peer institution to another" but from "great research universit[ies]" to less prestigious ones.

Such moves are conditioned by the combination of a universal institutional fact - that every academic is at all times shaped by certain interests, methods, specialties and personal styles that prevail for a time over others and then give way different ones - with infinitely variable personal responses. In other words, individuals choose to remain within one department or seek a more appealing one on the basis myriad intellectual, collegial, psychological, pedagogical, ideological, familial, dispositional, and career needs, capacities and priorities.

Professor Laycock knows that at least three of his tenured colleagues (Patricia Cain, Barbara Aldave, and Stanley Walker) have made choices (leaving the prestigious UT School of Law for, respectively, the University of Iowa, St. Mary's Law School and no academic position at all). Beyond my understanding that these professors had disagreements with some of the decisions at Professor Laycock's shop, I have no idea why they left.

So I am unable to infer that the School of Law "must have been hell, or they would not have risked professional suicide to escape." But maybe I just lack interpretive acumen.

Maybe if I'd listened to my parents, gone to law school, instead of immersing myself in ambiguous, humanistic mush of literary study, it would be easier for me to rise to Professor Laycock's heights of clairvoyance.

Evan Carton
Professor of English