

A pensive Charles P. Larowe:
Impressive WW II combat record helps

opposed to office — public or otherwise. But that doesn't mean that his voice, with its trace of an Eastern accent, isn't heard throughout the university and beyond. His students rate him "an excellent professor with an unpleasant personality." That he attributes to his teaching by Socratic dialogue. "Most students complain that they're just IBM numbers, that they're lost in this giant bureaucracy," expounds Adams. "I always tell them that in my classes they won't be just a number; I'll get to know them, they'll be individuals, but they'll pay the price. There will be no place to hide in that classroom. They'll be individuals, all right, but they will not be able to sleep in class, they will not be able to read the *State News*, they will not be able to talk to their neighbors. Learning is not a spectator sport."

Comments Larowe: "Adams says the Socratic method — but that's not discussion, that's badgering, that's scaring the hell out of them. That's the Paper Chase sort of thing. That's why I don't like that system myself. The effect that method of teaching has on students is to frighten them."

Inside the classroom and out, the bow tie-wearing, cigar-smoking Adams is considered a distinguished economist as well as a critic of the establishment. He has been called to testify before national and state legislative committees in the company of the nation's No. 1 economist John Kenneth Galbraith and the nation's top gadfly Ralph Nader. The *Washington Post* and the *New York Times* last summer asked Adams to write columns about inflation. His position is radical only in the sense of going back to the roots, for Adams adamantly believes in good old back-to-the-basics competition. Break up those giant corporations, do away with government constraints on im-

"We should applaud students when they find a cause to speak up for. They will be stuffed shirts soon enough."

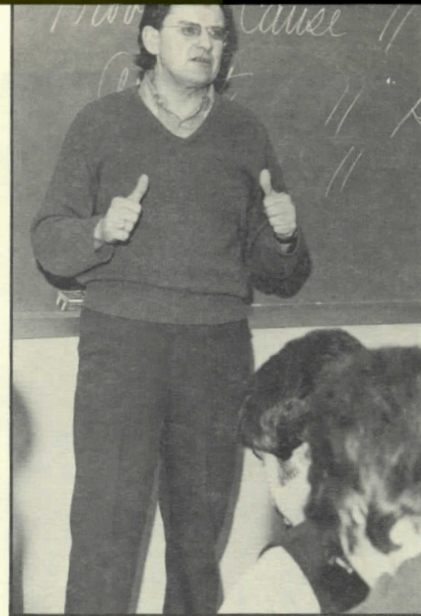
port competition and government-approved price fixing. Last fall he was an expert witness in the largest conglomerate merger case on record. Occidental Petroleum, the twelfth largest petroleum company in the country, tried to buy Mead Corp., the fifth largest paper company in the country: Six billion dollars in assets merging with \$2 billion in assets. Mead did not want to sell and sued Occidental on anti-trust grounds in the U.S. District Court in Dayton, Ohio. Adams commuted to Dayton by private plane three times a week so that he wouldn't have to miss his Monday-Wednesday-Friday classes.

Despite his protestations that "administration is not my bag," Adams was named acting president in 1969 while a successor for John Hannah could be found. After nine months of his administration, 20,000 students and 950 faculty members signed a petition — they wanted Adams to stay on. His popularity can perhaps be attributed to the fact that during that turbulent year — full of anti-war, anti-ROTC, anti-establishment demonstrations, Adams managed to keep the peace — a peace with humor.

Larowe remembers a rally at Demonstration Hall when students, led by SDS leaders, planned to storm the ROTC offices in the building. "Walter got the crowd to start laughing. The leaders were furious. Eventually the crowd dispersed, laughing and repeating Walter's jokes. He displayed what I would call genius," says Larowe.

Says Adams, "My secret of conflict resolution is very simple. I handle it in the same manner I would a classroom — in the Socratic dialogue. I try to have a rational dialogue which may not eventuate in a perfect answer or an ideal answer. But nothing else produces an awareness of the complexity of the problem."

And talk he did. Shortly following his appointment, a group of students rallied at the Placement Bureau to stop the Oakland, Calif., police from interviewing job candidates. Adams was in the thick of it, inviting the protesters to examine all sides of the issue: Would the police ever be reformed if they were not allowed to recruit enlightened college graduates? Didn't students have a right to interviews?



Zoltan Ferency in the classroom:
"Alumni should assist MSU"

Adams personally escorted students to their interviews. There was no violence. Adams later told the *State News*: "While I am always delighted to have a dialogue with students, I do prefer to have that dialogue in a nice, ventilated classroom rather than in a stuffy corridor where I am in short supply of cigars and don't have ready access to a bathroom."

While dialogue was his secret in dealing with conflict, he probably managed to keep his sanity by keeping his priorities straight. A graduate of Yale, Adams decided to accept a faculty appointment in 1947 at MSU over two other job offers because he had learned that Biggie Munn and Duffy Daugherty were coming to East Lansing from Syracuse and that, he thought, boded well for MSU sports. He once turned down the opportunity to teach for a full year in France because he didn't want to be away from MSU during football season. While he was MSU president, he refused to sit in the president's box, favoring his usual 11th row seat on the 38-yard line, close to the action. Recalls Adams, "I never once sat in the president's box. I let Jack Breslin play host to all our visiting dignitaries. I know it was selfish of me, but there are some pleasures in life I refuse to give up."

Comparing Edgar Harden's first nine months in office with his own, Adams comments ruefully, "President Harden has achieved a record that very few presidents in the future will be able to equal. He's been in office something like nine months and has won two championships for us in major sports — football and basketball."

Adams' goal as president, he has repeatedly said, was to be the president with the shortest tenure and the best football team. Well, Walter, one out of two isn't all that bad. ■