

# Emotions Dangers Objective Selection

An honorary degree for Dr. Ellsworth Barnard? It certainly is one of the most emotionally packed subjects that a decision has had to be made on at Northern in some time. In fact, there has probably not been a situation during this school year that stirs up such a wide range of strong emotional reaction as the name Dr. Ellsworth Barnard will.

He was to some a rather harmless peaceable man of the highest rectitude. But, especially after the University's schism over the fate of Dr. Robert McClellan, he came to be viewed by others as a dangerous anarchist of sorts.

Last year during the height of the McClellan controversy Dr. Barnard submitted his resignation effective at the conclusion of the second semester.

Speaking from my own frame of reference it hardly seemed like an effective way for an individual with the academic qualifications that Barnard had, to handle this confrontation. This unwillingness to work toward a settlement that he, along with everyone else, would have to live with, seemed something less than all the fine things Dr. Barnard was to many people.

However, this interpretation is from one frame of reference. Things undoubtedly looked an awful lot different to the idealist Ellsworth Barnard who had very black and white concepts of right and wrong all of his life, with little room for compromise.

However the Board of Control did accept Dr. Barnard's resignation and when he reapplied for a position at a later date there were no senior posts available in the English Department under Northern's system of fixed positions. As it was put by his department chairman, there were no funds available.

Whatever the reasons, Dr. Barnard will not be returning. So much emotion has surrounded him as a result of his final year that he tends to be evaluated strictly on that basis. To some, that meant some very serious and irrational personal mistakes, while to others it meant a personal, moral, idealist triumph.

Partisans at both extremes may tend to forget that regardless of his politics, his greatest achievement was that while Northern was going through a critical decade of growth, Dr. Barnard was one that upheld the highest and fairest academic standards in the classroom. He would undoubtedly have to be one of a handful of the finest faculty Northern has had.

Even if it were assumed that Dr. Barnard had made some bad mistakes in his final year, it would be unfortunate to forget or even minimize his overall contribution to the University.

After all, by the same token, it could also be said that Dr. Edgar L. Harden made some fairly sizeable mistakes in his final year as president. This certainly doesn't mean that his overall contribution to Northern Michigan University can be ignored.

Recommending Dr. Barnard as an honorary degree recipient may be personally upsetting to some people. However, because of his extensive contributions to NMU, he deserves to be given most serious consideration.

When looked at in this light, maybe Dr. Barnard would make an extremely well qualified and fitting recipient of an honorary degree from Northern Michigan. Also, by the same token, the honorary degree committee may feel they have more fitting individuals to honor.

As one final word of explanation, there was probably no one in the University last year more critical of Dr. Barnard's professional behavior than the editor of the *Northern News*. At some very critical times, his emotions seemed to completely dominate his logic. But then there were individuals at the other extreme who were equally guilty of this same offense.

Ellsworth Barnard was for a decade an academic giant at Northern. And even though his sense of reality may have been subject to criticism, the sense of morality exhibited by this basically peaceable man was, at least idealistically, beyond reproach.

Looking in retrospect these attributes of his may have even rendered a restraining effect upon the McClellan conflict.

Speaking from a very personal point of view as my own tenure as editor of the *Northern News* is within one semester of the end, I would certainly hope that I'm not evaluated after I leave solely on the basis of my last mistake. I hope my complete tenure is taken into consideration.

This isn't to say that either one of us, Dr. Barnard or myself, will be honored as saints. In fact, for one or both of us the result could be quite opposite. The one thing this does mean is that our performances will be looked at in its entirety and evaluated as such.