

Rejoinder

Piet Groeneboom

As a general principle, I think that newspapers and magazines should not invite people to write comments directly after columns. If one allows this, then the columnist loses all freedom to use satire or other means that are specific to writing columns. Fortunately NRC newspaper does not invite the ministry to write comments on Youp van 't Hek's columns, in defense of their valued members! But since 'my' magazine has invited the Leiden faculty to write a comment, I wish to say a few things in response to the attacks of Mr. van der Duijn Schouten and the faculty in Leiden.

The purpose of my satirical column was to contrast the firm looking (but in this case impossible) 'flagrant délit' with the circumstantial evidence and means, motive and opportunity, because that seemed to be the issue here. Nobody *saw* who changed the grades in the forms or let them disappear, so there was clearly no flagrant délit observed. One therefore had to resort to other means to find the truth, of which the statistical 'cowboy experiment' was an example. And of course, to circumstantial evidence and means, motive and opportunity (using the words of 'camp 2'). Mr. van der Duijn Schouten calls these words a 'firm conclusion'. But it is not a firm conclusion (and also certainly not *my* conclusion: I explicitly say that I refrain from judgement). Inspector Mallory of the 'Father Brown' stories always uses words like these and is always wrong.

I did not say that all 8 statisticians left *because* of these events. But it certainly was the start of the difficulties. The sarcasm of 'the university authorities assure us that matter is now closed' in my column seems to escape Mr. van der Duijn Schouten and the Leiden contingent. They want people to forget about it. Unfortunately for them, the Mare article appeared and people should be allowed to give it a thought.