

# Humanizing our "factory" environment

by Ben Verdam

The Faculty of Education stands somewhat apart from the rest of the campus. It is "home" to more than 5,000 students, making it one of the larger faculties at the U of A.

Many Education students feel that they are merely part of an enormous assembly line. Unending streams of bodies flow through its "off brown" halls, hurrying from class to class, where harried profs, facing impersonal masses, turn screws, apply pressure and shave off rough edges.

In anywhere from one to four years, the finished product rolls off the line and goes forth to do its part in perpetuating the system.

The Education Students Association is attempting to reduce the inevitable sense of frustration inherent in being part of an exclusive "club" by giving students representation geared to making life at the school more enjoyable and meaningful.

Unlike the Students' Union, which charges a compulsory fee, membership in the ESA is free.

Richard Magee, a fourth year Ed. student, this year's president, explains: "The ESA was dormant for quite a few years until its resurgence last year. We want to show students that we are a viable organization, that we give them something of value, before asking them to contribute financially."

Operating costs are met from the \$750 provided by the SU and from the profits of the social events sponsored by the ESA.

Operating with a core group of about 15 people, the ESA tries to encourage student involvement in Student Union affairs and to provide services of interest directly to the Education student.

Some of the current projects are the sale of T-shirts and grad rings. Through the ESA, students can also buy memberships in the ATA for the low fee of one dollar. There are obvious advantages to belonging to this body. Members receive ATA magazines, a teacher diary and the use of the ATA resource centre materials. ATA also kicks back two dollars to the ESA for each one dollar membership purchased, thereby increasing its working capital.

Once a month the ESA runs a social for the purpose of bringing students and faculty together on a person to person basis. Profits from these events are used to finance future socials.

Like the rest of campus, the organization is no hotbed of radicals. Socials are peaceful gatherings, perhaps due to the bouncing services provided by the Judo Club.

At times, however, the ESA speaks out. Last fall approximately 200 students marched to the Parliament buildings and presented a petition carrying more than 500 names, to protest the stalemate in negotiations over the extended practicum.

This march, according to Magee, not only "helped to draw students together, it also produced results. Within three days student teaching was resumed." This, he claims, "showed students the ESA is looking after their interests."

The Executive members are interested students who do not get paid for their time and effort. They meet every Thursday in the ESA office in the new wing of the Ed. Bldg. Any student can attend these meetings and is allowed a voice in the decision making process.

The present term of office expires in March, at which time elections will be held to fill the positions of President, Vice President and Secretary-Treasurer.

Apart from these high-echelon jobs, students can serve on various committees. The ESA "appoints students to these bodies but makes no attempt to influence the way in which they vote," says Magee. Anyone interested in serving on the GFC, the nominating committee or on any other body where Education students are

represented is asked to contact the ESA office.

Future ESA plans include a graduation party at the MacDonald Hotel on April 10. Tickets for this event are \$25 per couple. It is hoped that students from other faculties will attend this function as well. Speakers from the Provincial and Federal governments and university officials have been invited.

The graduation party, like all other ESA sponsored events, is planned on a break-even basis. Any profits are used to finance future happenings, and to defray the day to day operating expenses.

Student awareness of the 'existence' of the ESA is growing steadily. Over 2,000 people have attended the functions and academic forums sponsored by the organization. The Executive

hopes, to see this rising awareness continuing to insure that the ESA remains a viable organization

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