

Varsity Voices

Architecture

To The Editor:

For the past several years, I have wondered why the face of the campus has become progressively more unsightly as each new building rears its ugly head. Now, thanks to the article in the Friday, Nov. 15 Gateway, I have the answer—it is deliberately intended to be that way by those who are responsible for its design. And what is even more appalling, those responsible for the growing form of the campus are trying to justify their inept efforts by attempting to pull the wool over the eyes of the students and the public, who have to pay for these unfortunate mistakes.

Dr. B. E. Riedel, the appointed chairman of the Campus Planning Committee, must be congratulated for this singular audacity in explaining the existence of a plan for the aesthetics of campus architecture. It is unfortunate that a man who is chairman of the CPC should be so misinformed about aesthetics and especially basic design fundamentals.

Dr. Riedel defines a homogeneous campus as "being pleasant, with adequate open areas, and having buildings that don't conflict with each other." I think most students on almost any campus in the world will agree that this is a good general description of the campus with which they would like to be associated.

But Dr. Riedel says the CPC has no plans for uniformity in building design, and he gives the frail excuse that "changing standards require changing design"; that is merely an attempt to hide the fact that those responsible for the design of the buildings are obviously not qualified to create buildings that are honest to their function and a pleasant complement to their surroundings.

As an example of this, in less than 15 years the copy of Sir Christopher Wren's brick and stone edifice had to be supplemented by a much more vulgar copy of the curtain wall box in order to meet the library demands on this campus; on the other hand, UBC has been using the same building for decades, because it was planned for expansion by means of the foresighted arrangement of both its interior and exterior spaces.

Two of the most neglected aspects of the U of A campus are the existence of beautiful and related buildings, and the presence of pleasant, inviting outdoor spaces. There are very few places on the campus that provide an incentive for students to sit down together for relaxation, conversation, and study in the open air amid pleasant and inspiring surroundings.

UBC, Oregon, Washington, Stanford, and Berkeley campuses, for example, have a great variety of these refreshing spaces. What is even more appalling than the presently existing situation is the location of the proposed buildings mentioned by Dr. Riedel; these are located so as to remove the last of the campus open spaces rather than to create more open, defined spaces.

Dr. Riedel tries to defend the design of individual buildings by stating that "the functional aspect is important." However, one of the functions of a building, especially a public building, is that it should be beautiful. Good architecture is a three dimensional art form in which the activities and aspirations of man take place.

Even when one considers the basic utilitarian planning of the new buildings, there is much evidence that these new buildings are not good solutions to the functional problems involved.

For example, having to return one's books to the new library by means of a hole in the wall at the end of a narrow stairway is not functional; rather it is an inconvenience that should have been alleviated by locating several return slots at ground level, where mechanical conveyors would then deliver the books to their required destinations.

And what functional justifications can there be for the gigantic steel columns that support the fake folded plate overhang, at the south-west corner of the building, which does nothing but add to the unsightliness of the undulating fascia. Another example of poor planning occurs in the new Food Services Building. In any building which has to accommodate large groups of people, the most obvious thing should be the circulation and traffic; but in Lister Hall one has to search for the vertical circulation route that takes one to the second floor. Having to put a sign on the floor of the corridor to tell people where to go upstairs is an admission of poor planning. Cross traffic in the serving line is another example of inadequate planning. A study of the floor plans of Lister Hall reveals the spaces are forced and arbitrary rather than designed and controlled.

Mr. Louis Demote has been appointed as a campus planning consultant, to create a more functional campus, I suppose. But what is so functional about locating the campus cafeteria a half-mile from the campus center, while greenhouses and other minority-use buildings are occupying the heart of the campus? It seems that the CPC should have followed the practice of our neighboring provinces in obtaining campus planning consultants.

Saskatchewan, after deciding to create a new campus at Regina, obtained the services of Mr. Minoru Yamasaki, one of the best architects in the world. (Those who have visited the U.S. Science Pavilion at the Seattle World Fair will remember the delightful and functional spaces Yamasaki is capable of creating.) When British Columbia decided to create a new campus at Burnaby, a competition was held, with two of Canada's most gifted and imaginative architects, Arthur Erickson and Geoffrey Massey, being awarded the job of planning the campus in detail. It takes imagination and ability to create good architecture and a beautiful campus, not gimmicks, clichés, and feeble excuses to justify incompetent design.

Dr. Riedel wishes that someone would be able to design, the "perfect building—in relation to design, function, and cost." Why doesn't he use architectural firms who have already proven their ability to create outstanding examples of contemporary architecture? There are several well known, well established, and well qualified architectural firms in Western Canada that are increasing their reputation each year by the buildings they have created and the awards they have won. UBC has three buildings which have won national awards for outstanding architecture. U of A will never have anything better than its usual vulgar and brutal style of architecture unless the present situation is removed.

Another statement Dr. Riedel made was, "if someone on the staff wanted to direct the aesthetic nature of our planning, I'd ask the president to appoint him to the committee." However, the professional opinions of faculty members who are qualified to speak of aesthetics are not taken too seriously. When the

mural on the Engineering Building was being designed, two members of the U of A fine arts department were asked to give their comments on the proposed design. Their advice was that the proposed mural was not of a quality deserving of a university campus. However, their professional advice went unheeded, and the dull, stylized, wishy-washy effort of some draftsman in the Department of Public Works now takes the place of what could have been a jewel on the U of A campus.

It is already too late to make the U of A a great campus. Lack of foresight, lack of a good master plan, and especially poor architectural design has produced a crowded, chaotic campus that boasts a vulgar style of architecture that can well be called "brutal functionalism?" (The question mark is important because one can question this aspect of the building as much as the aesthetics aspect.)

Although the future is not bright at all for the Edmonton campus, let it be a powerful force to prevent a repeat at Calgary. It is not yet too late for Calgary to have a good, beautiful, orderly, functional campus of which the people and students of Alberta will be justly proud.

Alumnus,
B.A., B.Arch.

Chapel Issue

To The Editor:

I agree with your editorial of Nov. 15, that Students' Union funds should not be used to finance, even in part, the proposed chapel in the new Students' Union Building. I would like to make it known, to you, and the student body, that the chapel will not be built unless it can be entirely financed by non-Students' Union sources.

I assure you, that I approached the Students' Union Planning Commission's outline for the new Students' Union Building very critically, but I could find no serious major objection or criticism of the extremely conscientious and responsible work done by the commission.

I hope that before an emotional controversy grows too large, those who feel concern will familiarize themselves with the commission's proposals.

Sincerely,
Dixon Thompson, Sc IV
Chapel Convener,
Students' Union Planning
Commission

Hinman Defended

To The Editor:

I wish I were an editor;
So I could write much bunk
Of freedom myths and all
that rot:

And say that chapels stunk!

How many students shoot pool? I would hazard a guess that no interest in the game is held by the majority. How many students indicate a religious preference? I would hazard a guess that the majority DO have an interest in some "Christian" worship. A chapel might well be a facility of SUB used by the students who at present have little connection with Students' Union activities. Let's make SUB a spiritual as well as social center.

The second editorial of Friday's Gateway would lead one to believe the honorable editor must have taken at least one atheistically orientated (sic) sociology course, but if he did he only learnt the important things and missed trivialities like socialization of the individual which in its initial and greatest aspect de-

Architecture Was Bad, Now Gone To Hell; Chapel In SUB May Rectify Situation

pends upon parents "moulding" the child's ways, for this is how the largest portion of culture and HUMAN qualities are transmitted.

MYTHS

If the first "myth" is Mr. Hinman's, then truly he is either an unfortunately ignorant person or possesses knowledge of E.S.P. unknown to most. For the idea that anyone could explain all of another's thoughts let alone know them seems fallacious at best.

Surely "as members of the larger community they (profs) have as much right to be critical of the system as the members at large." But such dissatisfaction can be expressed in the context of the larger community rather than the confines of the university classroom. Their public roles consist to a great degree of teaching as employment, and what they teach is certainly of concern to their employers.

EMPLOYERS' RESPONSIBILITY

The employer is shirking his responsibility as well as asking for great loss when he no longer realizes his position. And whether the employer is held responsible for an employee's indiscretions depends on if they occur on the job or not.

FREEDOM

If freedom is lack of control then Mr. Hinman's remarks on the university as "an environment where freedom of thought is the highest concern" are indeed mythical. For today the university is fortunate if it can teach people to think. (period) Since thinking demands great internal control of the mental faculties, freedom is better stated as lack of external controls. But thought itself cannot be known or controlled externally—only actions.

Another most interesting editorial notion is that an age (because of its culture and concepts) can accept nothing that is thought of for the first time at the university. One need only consider the scientific advances not only accepted but also enjoyed today to recognize a poor argument. Does anyone have a GOOD argument against Mr. Hinman?

Doug Hendrickson

P.S. If SUB expansion must be utilitarian for many, why not a parkade?—which WOULD PAY

ITS OWN UPKEEP?

And if one wants to argue the principle of not supporting institutions one doesn't agree with, what about the Students' Union? I bet we'd have a chapel if each student could choose between having his \$37.50 spent as it now, or else spent on a chapel!

Socialist Again

To The Editor:

We are surrounded everywhere by injustice and inequality, and yet our Capitalism-drugged minds do not seem capable of perceiving it.

Take the question of marks, for example.

We continue to allocate course marks on the stupid free-enterprise principle of effort and intellectual merit—rather than on the progressive, socialist principles of Equality and Need.

Have our professors never read the Declaration of Independence, wherein it is stated that "all men are created equal?"

Have the great social-democratic documents of our time, ranging right down to the Regina Manifesto, gone unread by our faculty?

Did not the great Marx himself declare that under a perfect form of society, it would be "from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs?"

Who today has greater need than those without ability?

Is it fair that our intellectually less fortunate and underdeveloped brothers should be embarrassed and humiliated simply because they are intellectually less capable, through no fault of their own?

As a representative of the Working Class, I demand that the university forthwith redress this grievance.

Examinations have become the great Intellectual Means Test of our time; they have become associated with the same kind of humiliation and degradation associated with all Means Tests.

We will not tolerate this inequity. All men have a right to good marks.

All students must forthwith be allocated marks on the basis of Need, not Ability to Earn.

Until the millenium arrives, I will continue to be,

Yours,
Socialist

Richard McDowall's Musings



First snows change the complexion of everything. Most of all it seems that snow is only really appreciated by children. When the first snowflake falls, children cannot wait to get on their boots and to get outside and slush and slide in the snow.

One sees them everywhere—it is almost as if they have just come out of hibernation. They are laughing, dancing, jumping, and making graceful movements in the snow. They run, slide, slip, fall; in fact, it seem that they have been longing for this snow so that they can enjoy this new white world.

One sees them on their bicycles making zig-zag tracks in the snow, going around and around and always looking behind to see what kind and form of pattern has resulted. Endless patterns they make, all exciting to them—they touch the branches of the hedge to feel the snow, they shake the tree to watch the branches discard their white cloaks, they make odd tracks with their feet—they do anything because they are free.

They roll up the snow in their hands, they crush it, move it, they lick it, finding in each action something new and existing.

Most men don't like snow. It plugs up traffic, it generally means cold weather which means stalled cars, scarves, slippery streets, and shovelling of sidewalks. Snow to most people is a nuisance. We are so concerned with the problems of everyday living that many of us are shackled by life itself and snow is just another burden.

Children enjoy the beauties of nature because they are not yet contaminated by the ills of society. They are free and natural and snow to them is something priceless; it is creation, it is simplicity.