



WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF HE WERE ABOLISHED?

Do students know as much as their profs?

Once upon a time, when the world was young, students came to a college or university to learn. But life has changed, and students now feel they know everything already, and they apparently come to college or university only to bully the professors and administration into conformity with their own political doctrines.

There was a pathetic but amusing little piece in the U. of T. Varsity a short while ago complaining that President Claude Bissell had an 'elitist' view of the University because he has the preposterous notion that some people have more wisdom than others! Now this has always seemed to me one of the cold, hard facts of life—that some people have more wisdom than others (Bertrand Russell, compared to, say, Soupy Sales). But in our increasingly equalitarian society, this has become an embarrassment. In the bold new age into which we now resolutely stride, fists clenched, chins out, eyes glassy, Everyone is as good, and as wise as Everyone Else, and in implementing this new levelling, the few heads protruding above those of the crowd, must, of course, roll. As Tony Macgregor so nobly expressed it in this paper recently, "If we have to have a few bloody heads to gain human dignity, let's have them now."

"The important thing is that educational institutions should not become extensions of a political movement any more than they should be instruments of big business interests."

The catchword for all this is of course 'democracy', and who can object to that? The college, we are told, must be run 'as a democracy'. It sounds quite reasonable until, on examining precisely what it means, we find that it involves allowing the nature of knowledge and truth to be decided by a majority vote.

The supporters of 'student power' say they want the university and all its courses to be 'radicalized'—in other words they want all instruction to be oriented to their own political beliefs. Under this New Order in Education, instructors would have to tell students only what the students want

to hear, under threat of being democratically voted out of their livelihood. The teaching of English, for example, would concentrate on the political views of the authors studied. I have heard the demand that the 'segregated', 'reactionary' poetry anthologies now in use (containing Spenser, Shakespeare, Milton, Eliot and other bourgeois writers) be dumped and replaced with 'radical', 'integrated' anthologies (presumably including Countee Cullen's doggerel, LeRoi Jones' hate poetry—'Smash their jellyfaces'—and Joe Wallace's hymns to Sputnik).

The Student Power leaders are Marxist materialists; we need have no illusions about how the implementation of their doctrines would change the nature of education: every subject from anthropology to solid state physics would be 'taught' according to Marxist-Leninist pseudo-philosophy. It sounds ridiculous and impossible, but this is precisely what has happened in every country where Marxism has come to power, from Germany to Cuba.

The stultifying dogmas of socialist realism in art, Lysenkoism in genetics and behaviourism in psychology managed in the countries where they were applied to systematically strangle worthwhile art and science and replace them with 'people's art' and 'people's science'. This sort of populism we can do without.

The student power people are convinced they are resisting conformity and authoritarianism, but what they are in fact resisting is the oppressiveness of their own freedom. Western society, and in this at least, the student power spokesmen would agree, is afflicted by a dreadful lack of real spiritual purpose; material gain and an illusory 'progress' are all we are offered in return for our obedience and our effective silence. The student revolutionaries have at least grasped this fact, as the capitalists of the corporate elite which presently runs our institutions of 'higher learning' certainly never will. But while grasping this, what they do not recognize, what they are profoundly afraid of recognizing, is that they themselves are infected with this same loss of individual purpose and this same lack of self-belief. It is evident in their conversation, in their writing, in their whole life-style—a deep and terrible nihilism, no less terrible because it is concealed by the blander nihilism of the society that gave rise to it.

As it is manifested in their formal education, this lack of self-belief and attendant lack of real values on the part of many young people is reflected in the fact that they (like the author of the Varsity article) cannot stand the thought that the instructors might know more than the students do or that they seem to have a set of values of their own. Unable to believe in their own sense of affirmation, they are frightened by

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their professors, frightened by the often illogical and bureaucratic structure of the institutions they have joined, and, unwilling or unable simply to withdraw (for no-one is forced to attend college), they instead look around for a mob to join or a pack to howl with so that they can feel warm and comfortable as part of yet another Big Group (The Canadian Student Movement, linked by ties of fraternal support with our comrades in Berlin, Bulgaria and Uttar Pradesh). As Genghis Khan said of the Horde, 'It gives you a nice feeling of belonging.'

The other night, I heard someone called Andy Wernick introduced to a left-wing meeting as 'the leader of the Canadian student movement'. This, I'm sure, is news to most students. (Mr. Wernick sports the title of 'University of Toronto Students' Administrative Council Education Commissioner'!)

All this huddling and fist-shaking is unnecessary and fraudulent. If a student has any real sense of individual self-worth and self-affirmation, even the most incompetent or tyrannical instructor or administrator could not engender the bitter resentment and smouldering violence evident in so many of the student power advocates today.

The cries of Power cover an appalling spiritual impotence—a malaise of the soul, and the ac-

tions they engender are nothing but phony heroics. At last year's graduation ceremonies at the U. of T., one militant young man took it upon himself to make a bad-tempered speech and tear up his degree. Of course, the University, being extremely liberal and tolerant of hot-headed young men, kindly gave him another one, as he had no doubt they would. They should have let him go without his degree if he was so displeased with it; and we would have had more caterwauling from that young man than from the baby who throws his dinner on the floor and bawls to be given another plateful.

But even though the revolutionaries' doctrines are Marxist, some clear parallels are apparent between what is happening now and events in Germany in the 'thirties. Then too, students (young Nazis in this case) rose up against their professors demanding that age give way to youth and that old, dead, bourgeois ideas yield to the surge of Power. There too, it was demanded that professors be dismissed for their political views. There too, as recently as Columbia, administration offices were broken into and books were burned. And there too, the students had 'allies' among the instructors.

Today, individuals like Jerry Farber use the Nazi pamphleteer Julius Streicher's technique of whipping up hatred by constantly associating one's enemies with obscenity. Streicher used this method in his paper *Der Sturmer* against the Jews; Farber, in his scurrilous article 'The Student as Nigger' used a similar method, manipulating students' sexual hangups, confusion, fears and self-loathing to turn them against their teachers.

We are told by men like Farber that North American students are downtrodden and oppressed. In reality, they are among the most privileged of the world's peoples. But some of them like to feel downtrodden and oppressed as a sop to bad consciences. Farber's comparison of students to 'niggers' encouraged this. It was not only cynical but betrayed a callous insensitivity to the real situation of the Black man in America.

Sometimes it seems if anyone is oppressed at the universities it is the faculty. I have seen an anthropology instructor continue lecturing for a full forty-five minutes while being pelted with paper and half-eaten fruit. And the poor man was so intimidated he just stood there and kept right on talking.

This article is reprinted from the Ryerson Polytechnical Institute's maverick newspaper, "The Eye Opener".

Its author, Ian Young, gives a thoughtful analysis of what the student power movement does to the concept of the normal North American university.

Besides being a political analyst, Young is a poet. His work is included in two forthcoming Canadian anthologies: *Fifteen Winds*, edited by Al Purdy, and *Poets of Canada—1969*, edited by James Penman Rae.

Background