

# The university student of today as viewed by deans of men, women

By R. C. W. HOOPER  
Dean of Men

Ask any student at random why he or she is at university and there will be almost as many answers as there are students. Some of the answers might be: search for knowledge, to gain a "union card", parental pressure (some in spite of negative parental pressure), because their high school friends went, it offers an active social life, it offers an escape from parental control, it delays the awful day when I will have to get out and earn a living. Fortunately most students have a fairly clear idea of why they are at university and most of their expectations are fulfilled. Usually, the student with a clear idea of why he is at university will encounter fewer problems.

## A MINORITY

There is a minority who do not find their expectations fulfilled. Reaction to this situation can take a number of forms, probably the most common is to drop out, leave the university and seek employment. Some of these students may return to university in later years when maturation is complete and when reasonable goals have been established.

Dissatisfaction may show itself in more active forms ranging from a student making his voice heard as to what changes he wants made to fulfill his expectations to outright nihilism which seeks to destroy all existing institutions—"from the ashes (an unspecified) something better will arise." Some element of rebellion is present in most students, manifest sometimes in a minor form such as skipping class. At the other end of the scale are those who seek to cause disruption in any manner; manufacturing issues where none exist and using every pretext to bring about a confrontation. There is a small group genuinely interested in improving the university who actively for change by legal methods and with constructive ideas. The university has benefited by their presence.

## STIMULATE THOUGHT

Some instructors will make use of this spirit of active or latent rebellion, in the genuine interest of stimulating thought. A few will use deliberate incitement to further ends of their own not related to their course of study. Some students will fall into this trap and allow themselves to be exploited.

On entering the university a student finds himself under pressure from many directions. Some are holdovers from high schools days. Parental pressure which seeks to stimulate the student to produce brilliant academic results. Social pressure which may result in a maximum of social enjoyment to the detriment of academic achievement. This pressure generally comes from a student's peers. The two major pressures are the academic and financial. As opposed to his counterpart in the United States he is under no pressure from a draft board.

## HANG-UPS

The mental health of a student varies directly with his ability to cope with the various pressures exerted upon him. Most students will adjust themselves to the new environment without too much difficulty, but for all there are "hang-ups" to a greater or lesser degree.

What are some of these hang-ups? Perhaps the most frequently heard charge against the university is that it is too big and too impersonal. Isn't that true of life anywhere in our society of today?



—Steve Makris photo

## TODAY'S STUDENT

... sophisticated, independent

A large university can mean a larger field for academic and social enjoyment. The larger the university, the larger the opportunity for making more friends, for a wider field of interests, for wider choice of courses of study. How the student seizes these opportunities depends on his initiative and his determination to get the best out of his university years.

Another source of hang-up is the challenge to his established or ingrained sense of moral and social values. Just who is right? His parents, his professor, his fellow student? Is our society all wrong? Should it be changed? What is his role in a changing society? Equipped with vigor, enthusiasm and impulsiveness of youth he is often quite willing to charge into these problems and show the older generation where they are wrong. To a generation who has never experienced the economic disaster of a depression or the horrors of a war this is an outlet for their energies. The older generation is responsible for the deplorable social conditions (real or imagined), for the sorry (?) condition of the university, therefore he is going to change all that. To some extent the student is right. He has the ability and energy to bring about

the needed changes.

More hang-ups can occur in social life. Has he a satisfactory group identification or is he lost in the crowd? There are many opportunities to establish a satisfactory group identity through the multitude of activities provided by the students' union, the University Athletic Board and the fraternities.

Finding an answer to the questions, Who am I? Where am I going? faces every adolescent and most university freshmen are still in the adolescent stage. Through his school years most of his career decisions have been made for him. He now wishes to throw off superimposed ideas and values and become an independent entity. A common reaction to this process of identity formation is not rebellion but noncommitment.

These are but a few of the problems besetting out student of today. He lives in a complex and fast changing world but he has the ability to cope with it. One has but to live and work with university students to realize that the present generation is a competent, thoughtful and lively group of young people in which we can place our trust to develop a better Canada.

By MISS ISABEL MUNROE  
Dean of Women

Are students today very different from what past generations of students have been? If they are different, is the difference very great? Why does it exist?—and is it a creative difference?

There are a wide range of opinions on this matter.

One premise is that students are always a "different" group, and by their very nature as students likely to be radical in their thinking and in their ideas—and that today's students are the same in this respect as students in the past, the only difference being that there are more of them!

A second view holds that most of the differences that seem apparent are due to the size of our universities, and the big institution aspect of our world. That this bigness has resulted in uneasiness and a sense of alienation for the student. This view sees the student as oppressed and powerless. Students and others wring their hands about all the inadequate or evil institutions that exist in the world, and then claim that it is natural for the student to be filled with anger, and to go around trying to wreck institutions.

## LIMITATIONS

Maturity in my view is most clearly demonstrated through a genuine capacity to accept responsibility for others as well as oneself—and a capacity to come to terms with genuine limitations that exist in all societies and in the very nature of life. Personally I believe that the majority of undergraduate students are at the stage of their life development where they are only "in process" of this stage of maturation. If we assume more maturity than they truly possess or can be expected to possess, we do students a disservice and create undue confusion both for the students and the university generally.

As a matter of fact the students' tendency to operate very independently may be something of a disadvantage in some instances where he/she needs to be seeking the experience of elders. Students by their very stage of life tend to see things more in terms of the present. This is an advantage of course in many ways. But students need to be aware that what is done in the present does inevitably affect the future, and sometimes they need the help of older, more experienced individuals to keep this in focus.

## ALTRUISM

They also can benefit from learning from others what past experience has demonstrated in certain areas. Because of their stage of life and learning, students are likely to combine a sort of theoretical altruism, along with considerable "self" focus. Despite their genuine involvement and contribution to a variety of very constructive causes, and the importance of this to the student's own development, they also require acceptance and help in dealing with the "self" focus, and with their search for identity and goals.

As a recruit from the field of human relations to the academic community, I see this direction to involve the more total person in the learning process, and to study problems in preference to the "subjects" as having a great deal of merit. I hope that students' drives to achieve this will not be dismissed by the rest of us as simply attacks on "the establishment". It is important that our

university community, our Alumni community, and our provincial community be in sympathy with the students' drive for relevant education and be prepared to support constructive and imaginative programs—programs that can release the creativity that lies in each student. Programs that can through the release of this creativity, avoid frustration building up unnecessarily. Programs that aren't inhibited or stifled by a too great commitment to the order of things being a certain way because "that is how it's always been done".

## SERIOUS GAPS

Students currently appear to be burdened by their awareness of some serious gaps in their involvement in university learning, and a sense that those outside their own generation don't really understand their dilemma. Maybe this is partly true, but the university community does have an opportunity to explore ways of supporting more and better communication between students and teachers, and this is a two-way responsibility, resting with both students and faculty.

Human and ethical goals are necessary for any society. Because they are no longer as simple to determine and to commit to, we have gone through a period of considerable abdication by default in any attempt to help the oncoming generation understand such goals and examine ways of implementing them. This is our failure, not the failure of the students' generation, because goals have to be established by the adults, leaving the means of reaching such goals open to exploration and negotiation. Human and ethical goals still have the power to capture the commitment of most of us—as witness the response to the idea of the "just society".

## GENUINE VALUES

Ethics courses are popular at the university, and students are actively searching for genuine values in these areas. More students than ever before wish to become involved in service projects—student religious groups on campus are very active and involve a considerable number of students. Students are really not so much "throwing out" old standards of morality, but rather indicating their need to understand and commit to morality that is honest, concerned with individuals and with humanity generally, and related to the world of the present.

Most of us "think" more morally than we are able to act. The student, because of his stage of development, the time in which he is living, and the focus on ideas in the academic world, is likely to reverse this order. He has a need to test out the expression of ideas that are often in conflict with conventional morality, when in fact he is simply searching for his own ethical base that can be understood and accepted by him. The student needs to challenge—and we need to be able to respond to this challenge to help the student really examine the issues, the goals, and the results.

Surely students today are living in a demanding and challenging world—but an exciting one in which they are demonstrating a real commitment, and in which the students' contribution will be very considerable in shaping what we are looking for in the world of the future, a world that keeps a primary focus on the well-being of all mankind.