

If you are like a lot of your friends then you might be an authentic snob

You think you are "enlightened, tolerant, and more or less groovy"

By IAN GREENE

"O wad some Pow'r the giftie gie us
To see oursels as others se us."

Robert Burns

An "average" U of A student, when required to express a critical appraisal of himself, will almost invariably state that, with all modesty, he would have to conclude that he is generally kind-hearted, open-minded, enlightened, tolerant, and more or less groovy. He would seek to prove this modest evaluation by comparing himself with an "average" Eastern Canadian student, or even better, with an "average" American student. Of course, everyone knows that Albertans are more friendly and warm-hearted than Eastern Canadians, and certainly more open-minded and enlightened than Americans. Don't they?

NO!

Many non-western Canadians attending this university think that our average student compares very unfavorably with his colleague in other parts of the world. If you happen to believe the above complimentary but misleading description of "the average Alberta Student" (hereafter referred to as AAS, with no ulterior motives, of course), you may find the views expressed below, which were gathered from interviews with "foreign" students, may have a somewhat unpleasant sting.

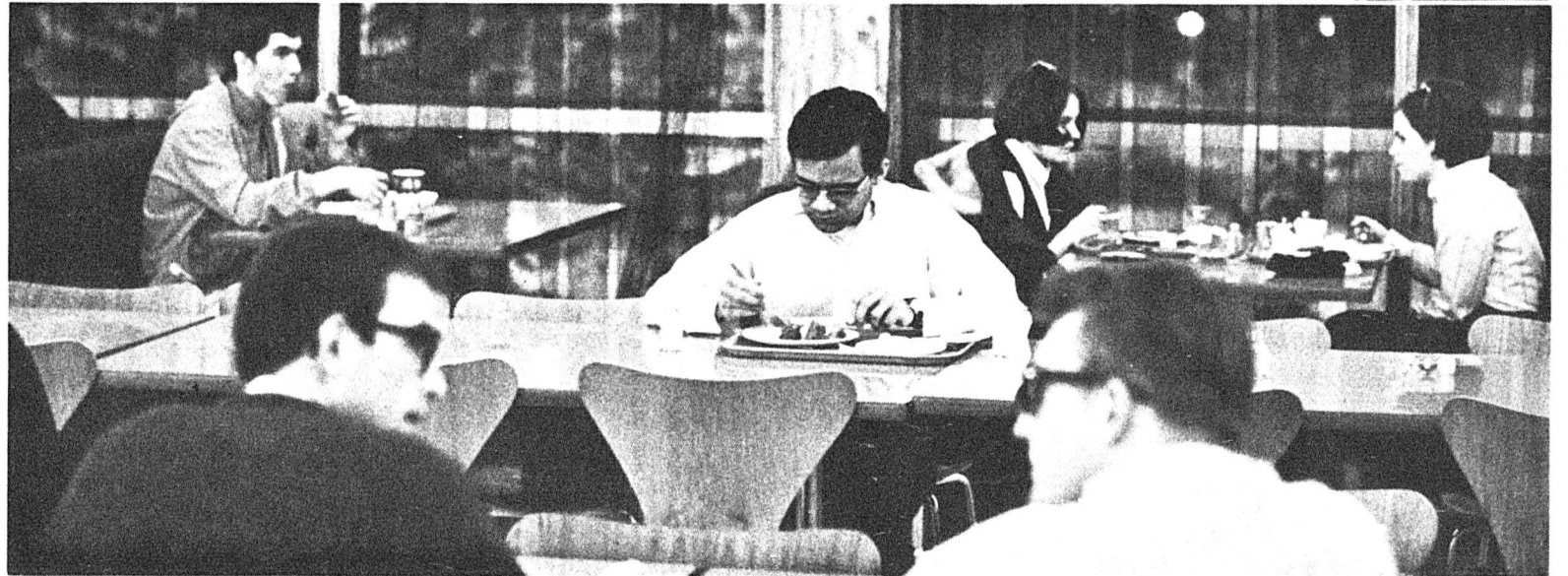
ARE YOU A SNOB?

The most frequent criticism of you, AAS, is that you are a snob. The U of A abounds in cliques—cliques which the outsiders see as almost impervious shields preventing him from making all but the most superficial friendships. Friendship is based more on personal appearance than on personality, more on who you know than what you are, more on your regard for Emily Post than on your regard for people. Some cliques exclude those who don't smoke pot; others exclude non-white; still others exclude non-Marxists, or non-capitalists. Generally, cliques exclude all those who don't share the narrow-minded views of those within them. Those students belonging to cliques based on narrow-minded views are snobs, of one sort or another. However, AAS, you still seem to think that you are open-minded.

ARE YOU NARROW-MINDED?

Open-mindedness is an attribute of Western Canadians in general, you say. Nevertheless, most "outside" students think you are among the most narrow-minded people of North America. Many do not blame you for this, because you are a product of your environment. Anyway, let's examine just why you present the image of being narrow-minded.

One of the first criticisms that Maritimers, English-speaking Quebecers, and Ontarians have of you is that you are unbelievably intolerant of French Canadians. To the "Eastern," who has perhaps had the chance to appreciate the beauty of the French-Canadian culture, who can understand the French Canadian's unique approach in coping with problems, you appear as a backwoods farmer suspicious of electricity. Even the more pro-WASP "Easterners" are forced to defend the French-Canadians. And to the French Ca-



—B.S.P. Boyer photos

THERE'S LOTS OF ROOM IN CROWDED UNIVERSITY FOR A LONELY MAN

... or is he just being snubbed by the snobs?

nadians themselves, you still appear to be fighting the battles of 1759. You still say you are open-minded?

Secondly, you seem to think that everything American is bad, because Americans are so narrow-minded. Why is it, then, that American students attending the U of A often outnumber Alberta students at Club Internationale functions? How many Albertans accept the argument that American tourists are indicative of all Americans? Is not that acceptance an example of narrow-mindedness?

Why do you so lightly dismiss the criticisms of our society by the Marxists, the Christians, the New Left, the "Easterners", and the foreign students? Isn't this narrow-mindedness?

Yes, AAS, you are narrow-minded. The worst crime is that you don't realize it.

ARE YOU INWARD-ORIENTATED?

You seem to think your greatest source of happiness is—yourself. You are perfectly content with your present views about life, with your own circle of friends, and with your own plans for the future. You aren't concerned with "public" things, like public issues, religion, and the poor. You aren't really interested in what other people, besides your own friends, think of you and your world. Oh, how lucky you are that you are so intelligent as to be able to disregard the help and criticism that other peoples of other cultures may have for you!

The real trouble with you, AAS, is that you suffer from narcissism. You are concerned only with yourself, so that you cannot see others objectively. You cannot truly love yourself or others. How long can you exist before you discover happiness lies not only in yourself?

ARE YOU FALSELY POLITE?

However, you certainly don't want to offend the outsiders, do you, AAS? It would hurt them if they knew that their cultural heritages are of no interest or value to you. It would hurt them if you told them your culture is superior to theirs—they are bound to find out sooner or later anyway, so there is no need to be frank.

It would hurt them if you told them you didn't want to go to their parties—so you go when they ask you, go with your narrow-mindedness as your shield, so the whole thing is an exercise in frustration. Anyway, they can't call you a bigot—you've been polite. Your friends can't say you engage in racial discrimination, can they?

But why can't you trust the outsiders as people—just like Albertans? Why do you persist in being falsely polite? Do you know the value of treating "outsiders" as people *qua* people? Evidently not. And that is because in your smugness, AAS, you are not willing to admit that they may have some-

thing intellectually valuable to offer you.

ARE YOU TOO MATERIALIST-ORIENTATED?

You assume, don't you AAS, all those outsiders are coming here because they want to learn to be like you. In university you are learning how to fulfill a role in society. You are learning how to aid technological progress so that more people can have more things. Everyone should be able to get a new car every other year, to buy a fur coat for his wife, and to live in a \$50,000 house. Philosophy, religion, literature, and music are only so much bunk—they only make you realize you are unhap-

py. To have things—that's happiness. To understand—to love—people is difficult, and therefore only leads to frustration.

Many "outside" students, however, don't want to adopt your attitude. They think it doesn't really lead to happiness. If you are ever willing to drop your narrow-minded shield long enough to consider the "outside" students' views, you may just find a formula for real happiness.

DO YOU HAVE LITTLE RESPECT FOR PEOPLE?

Of course, the way you treat the foreign student, AAS, may only differ in degree from the way you treat people in general. Foreign students criticize in you the attitude that a girl's main attribute is her sex, that a friend's main attribute is his money, and that a professor's main attribute is his willingness to be brown-nosed. If the foreign student were to tell you that a girl, a professor, or a friend is a person, that being people is their main attribute, that they have problems for which they want your help, and a richness of soul, from which you can benefit, you would probably reply that those ideas are teachings of old-fashioned and irrelevant cultures; we now live in a brave new world where those ideas are no longer necessary.

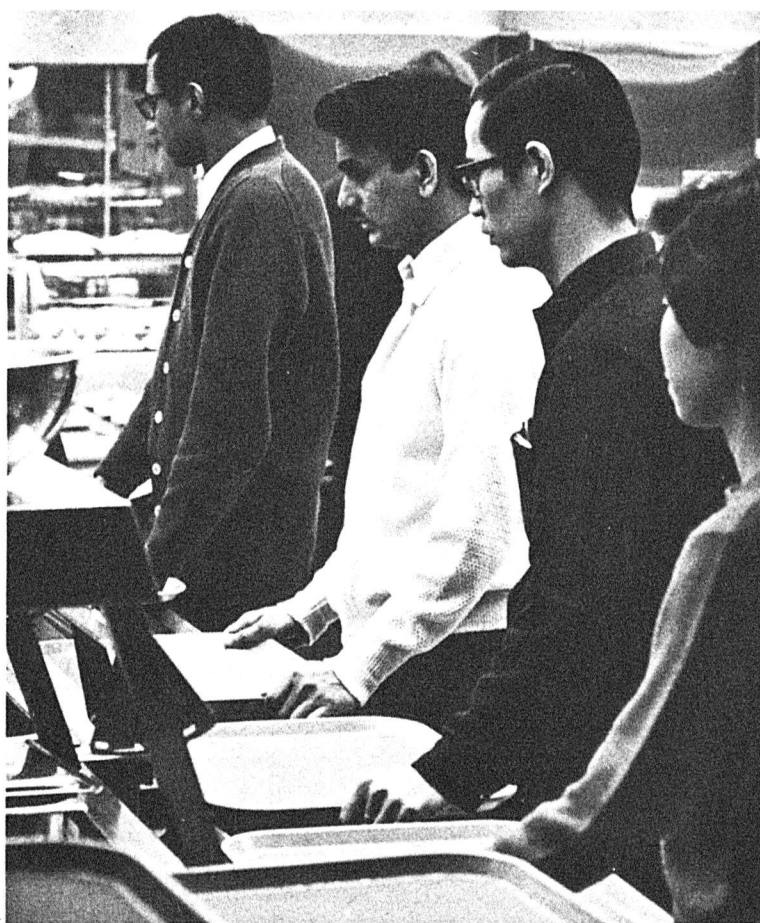
You may not like the above critique of yourself, AAS, but a good number of "outside" students see you as presented here.

If you understand yourself, you can improve yourself—and some improvement would help.

A FEW POSITIVE WORDS

Your first reply to all this may be that the "outside" students may not be happy with what they see, but so what—they have said nothing constructive. Of course, the foreigners recognize your good qualities—but so do you—you know what they are, and it won't help you if you read an article praising you. But if you can see yourself as others see you, perhaps you will learn how to improve yourself—to be more tolerant of new ideas, to be familiar with other cultures and societies before condemning them, to be objective, to understand yourself, and to love others.

And you, AAS, only YOU can do it.



HE EATS THE SAME FOOD

... but he isn't "one of the boys"