

university 'education'

quences of new discoveries what with our new awareness of the environmental crisis. But all too few researchers consider the political questions as to who should get the results of completed studies.

Precious little research is carried on with a view to developing a better life for forgotten minorities and issuing them with the results. What we require may be counter-research which imaginatively and stubbornly attempts to propound and develop stark new alternatives of outworn ways of doing things.

Ivan Illich calls for such research, a "research on alternatives to the products which now dominate the market; to hospitals and the profession dedicated to keeping the sick alive (the research required for a heart transplant while thousands die of amoebic dysentery) to schools and the packaging process which refuses education to those who are not of the right age, who have not gone through the curriculum, who have not sat in a classroom a sufficient number of successive hours, who will not pay for their learning with submission to custodial care, screening and certification or with indoctrination in the values of the dominant elite."

Provocative statements like Illich's above may remind academics that our quiet studies in carpeted offices do not cease to be political just because we avoid taking sides. Our decision not to

engage upon a study which would be given over to the poor for use against the existing economic and political order, far from being politically neutral is in fact politically reactionary. We fail to recognize that even our feeble attempts at futurity are rooted in the naive assumption that the political and educational climate and institutions within which we work are also neutral and harmless, if not powerless. American academics need only reflect on the fact that 65 percent of all university research is directly or indirectly sponsored by government agencies to show the error of such an assumption.

Perhaps the larger error we make as academics is to assume that our "politically neutral" empiricism removes us from a particular political position or commitment. What our stance does in fact is to make us full-fledged participants in the existing way of doing and seeing things. What reforms we may propound will all, in the final analysis, serve the existing social order. What is stifled within us, says Novak, is the "revolutionary, utopian, visionary impulse." We come to accept instead compromise, patience and acquiescence. We grow incapable of attacking problems in such a way as to build a significantly better system because we fail to strike with imagina-

tion and concern at the very roots of the traditional pattern and order. Our research produces reforms which are tacked on to the present social system. Yet "there is compelling evidence", says Novak, "that realistic social and political reforms do not, in fact, alter power arrangements or weaken key interest groups in our society; political symbols change, but the same elites remain in unchallenged power." What we are actually doing is concretizing or hypostatizing certain social, political, economic or educational alternatives and making them harden into reality or into the only possibilities, while fragile faintly visible possibilities become increasingly buried by the so-called tried and true.

Can We Justify Our Continued Association With Universities?

What we ought seriously to be questioning is how as faculty and students we can in all consciousness continue to associate ourselves with a university.

We justify our staying on in a teaching position only as we struggle to examine the myths which undergird the university and our own understanding of them. It seems to us that the unclinking of myths is the central task of all students be they social or natural scientists, philosophers or theologians, and that the unclinking must necessarily begin with ourselves, our own training and the institutions with which we are associated.

Secondly, we believe that as faculty we can justify an extended contract with the university if our teaching practices enable students to learn from the world rather than simply about it. Hence, we teach political institutions and we practice citizenship, we open up the universities to those who want to learn; the

desire to learn is their eligibility to enroll, not prerequisite courses, ability to pay or certification. We justify our attachment to the university as we detach ourselves and take our books, ideas and knowledge to be used by the larger community outside.

We should justify our research only as it becomes counter-research, that research which recognizes its political obligations and struggles to construct radical alternatives for a new society; that research which can be employed by those who most need it and seldom have access to it: the poor, the dispossessed, the politically defenceless minorities.

Thirdly, we justify our continued association with the university, by struggling to build a new moral view of ourselves and our education. The brilliant psychoanalyst and social critic Ernest Becker has written a most careful treatise called *Beyond Alienation* in which he ever so thoroughly traces the gradual return of morality to the post-scientific world-view and the content of education. We hope that in what we've already said about the university's moral failures you may agree with us that we need to grapple with the moral dimension of life in the university. Certainly we need to continue our scientific and philosophical analyses and comparisons of moral positions and ethical problems. But in addition we, all of us, faculty and students alike, need to express our questions of conscience, we need to encourage intelligent commitments and consciously engage one another with our senses of social obligation and personal convictions.

It would be comforting to think that the development and living out of such convictions may yet lead to some more humane, politically aware and morally sensitive community of scholars in the future.

Sharon: at your service



"Services" is the magic word student politicians throw at their constituency during election time. Thus, "services" is what the majority of students expect from their Students' Union. And, for most students, "services" equals Ratt, Dinwoodie Socials, Student Cinema, the Gateway to name just a few.

And yet, Terry Sharon, this year's v.p. services, feels services extend far beyond Ratt and the commercial outlets associated with the Students' Union, like S.U. Records, the Box Office, etc.

"Services can also be representing students to the provincial government. It is a service to students if you lobby on their behalf on an issue like financing of post-secondary education."

Talking to Terry, it becomes soon apparent that this year's v.p. services does not consider himself as an administrative caretaker of the commercial Students' Union outlets.

"The time we spent in administrating these commercial outlets could be spent better on issues that are really critical to the students on campus. Students pay their Students' Union fee to join a union and not to become share holders of a company. We might talk for hours about beer parlors and yet students get screwed in the financing of their education."

What we hope to see is probably a stabilization of our commercial outlets and further development of things that are needed like the Housing Registry."

F.A.S.

Terry feels that in his role as v.p. services he has as much political responsibility as the other

executive members. Thus, it is no surprise that Terry is also on the executive of the newly-founded Federation of Alberta Students.

He feels that the creation of FAS was indirectly brought about by the students themselves.

"What has been happening in these last couple of years is that students have become more and more concerned with the quality of education in Alberta. The Federation of Alberta Students was formed by the leaders of student associations to voice students' opinions to the increasingly important decisions that are being made by the provincial government concerning education and without consultation from students."

In reference to recent criticism that the executive has not sought student approval before going ahead with FAS, Sharon argues:

"Right now our task is to establish FAS. We have to establish the concept and show what can be done so that students can judge later."

Terry believes that there might be a FAS referendum next year.

Forums

Despite his emphasis on the service of lobbying and political activity, Terry does not neglect the everyday duties arising from the established "services". He places special emphasis on forums.

"Hopefully we will see more money going to things like forums. I can give you letters of speakers and they won't speak for less than 2000 or 3000 dollars. And I've got a \$3000 budget to work with."

"We hope to make more money on our concerts to spend on our forums because forums are dead losses unless we start charging for them."

CKSR

The resurrection of CKSR is another issue that the v.p. services and executive are currently tackling. Following the initial reservations concerning the financial viability of the station, Terry now feels more positive about the opportunity to bring CKSR back.

"I consider it quite important to have a radio

station because it also increases the communication of the Students' Union to students."

Thus, someday, we'll be able to hear CKSR on the air or via cable TV.

Personal Goals

Looking at his personal future, Terry, a fourth year education student, indicates that he would like to go into Grad Studies, "maybe in Education Foundation". He maintains that he has no political ambitions and that he has not thought of re-running for v.p. services.

Student Apathy

Terry recognizes that student apathy is widespread and that it may represent obstacles to political initiatives.

"I don't blame students. I blame the Students' Union which has made them apathetic over the last three or four years. The Students' Union has been too administrative-oriented and consequently has not fought on important issues."

"What the Students' Union has to do to get students involved is to present issues that interest people, issues that are faced by students everyday. In this way students will see that the Students' Union is very important. The SU has lacked leadership in taking up concerns of students."

Terry believes that the current executive has been more effective in tackling issues of concern than its predecessors. As an example he points at the executive's projects during the Housing Crisis; the Housing Registry and the Temporary Housing Units. And most important, in that context, the Students' Union got the provincial government and the university to admit that housing is their concern and consequently should be taken care of by them.

According to Terry, future issues to be tackled include the general standard of education, necessary improvements in classes, the lack of student involvement in the decision-making process of the university. "We have to move more and more toward complete democratization of the university." As an example, he refers to the necessity of student representation on tenure committees.