

The University Game: we must start asking the right questions

By LINDA GILLINGWATER

Editor's Note: This is the second in a series of essays on various topics of interest to the student today. This week Linda examines The University Game; next week she discusses the Pierre Berton's The Smug Minority.

Attendance at university precludes the possibility of education. This problem, and others which arise from this initial one, are examined in the so-called little red book of the educational revolution - The University Game.

The book begins with a burp. John Robson, a University of Toronto lecturer relates a typical day in life of an average professor. In this, the first of the ten free-wheeling essays that the book promises, we discover that most professors pick up dog shit at seven in the morning and greet a distraught wife whose ear is filled with baby's pabulum. So the day begins. He kicks a few co-eds and squirrels on route to school, delivers the wrong lecture to his class, throws chalk at a snoring student, and returns home to flush an ever-present student down the toilet.

The questionable humour that characterizes this worthless essay is outstripped only by the offensive "I'm all with you guys" posturings of John Seely in "The Berkeley Issue." Notes had been written about each of the contributors. Seely sent in an unsolicited biography. He has, he notes, contributed over three hundred articles to various illustrious journals. But it is not on this basis that he rests his claim to speak. Rather he presents himself as a "fellow-student and fellow-combatant." If this were not enough he tells us that he has inside knowledge of the administrative mind at work. Need we say more? Obviously not. What necessitated a burp in the first essay now calls for a belch.

No one questions the importance of the Berkeley confrontation. The students query: Who is running this show and what legitimate claim do they have to do so is one that needs to be asked in Canada as well. Seely notes the old bases of authority: the governors or regents have the money. Secondly, attendance at college has been regarded as a privilege, not a right. Or worse, the administration falls back on the non-argument that they have the power and thus have a right to it. As the situation now stands neither the students nor the faculty who actually constitute the structure have control over it. Freedom is fettered, Seely, despite his stupid claim that he is one of the few over-thirties who understand students, has partially pinpointed a major problem. His solution is too facile however. He suggests

that students and academics combine to educate and remake the laws together. This process might demand action that is immature in the traditional sense because, in some instances, reasonability curtails effectiveness. This may be true but, irrespective or whether the present power regime in any university were overthrown responsibly or not a cry for the abolition of a particular power regime is not an adequate response to a deeprooted problem. The authority which the board of governors has is as illegitimate as he claims it is but these barons of irrelevance are not chosen arbitrarily. They occupy positions of wealth in the community. Seely, while realizing this fact does not explore it fully and it is to George Grant and his article on the university curriculum that we must turn for our first adequate treatment of a basic issue.

Quite rightly Grant regards the curriculum as the essence of the university. The primary purpose of the college has been, however, to keep "technology dynamic within the context of the continental state capitalist structure." Obviously this aim is at odds with a true education much of the time. What is worse is that this goal has been ratified by the entire population. Consequently any real questions that may arise about education cannot be seriously raised. Science, the backbone of this pervasive technological society in which we live, has taken over.

Humanities are now justified on ludicrous grounds. One rationale is that they will teach us to direct new scientific knowledge to the proper ends - whatever that means. Or they will give us something to do when science frees us from a forty hour work week. Science and the capitalistic structure which it feeds are never questioned. Instead the humanities become more research-oriented (i.e. more scientific). They have now covered themselves in what Grant calls "the mantle of science and Protestant busyness." The humanities, heretofore regarded as legitimate disciplines and ones in which truth could be found are now prostitutes to the pimp the - capitalistic technological society. They are useful, not because they might bring man to the meaning of things but rather because they will act as Huxleyian feelers, escape mechanisms, and relaxants from the tensions that a competitive rat race establishes. Thus hypnotized the cogs will arise from a pseudo-refreshing experience to work smoothly and efficiently in the machine again. Questions of meaning will not arise.

But they must. And the questions put to the university, if they are not to be merely trivial, must be based on what we think human life to be, what directions and activities will best serve fulfillment of that life, and what place the university occupies in the realization of these goals. Ironically these questions are unlikely to arise. The university, by the nature of the programmes that it introduces, has insured that there is no serious criticism of itself nor of the society whose wishes it is structured to serve. Since we are, as Grant perceptively notes,

educated in terms of that curriculum it is guaranteed that most of us will affirm its position. Only those who stand outside society see its faults. But, by the very fact that such a person is outside, his criticisms will rarely be taken seriously.

Grant, because he has the intellectual discipline and training that mark an educated mind does not present us with a simplistic plan of action. Past decisions by the west have, he says, made "our world too ineluctably what it is for there to be any facile exit." One of the essential requisites that the academic must pursue if we are to escape this circle of fate is that he rediscover the buried memories of what the greatest have known of human excellence. This does not mean further technical scholarship. Rather it consists of a reactivation of the living principles of the past and their application, where relevant, to a present context. Only one criterion need be applied to the various attempts to transcend our present sterility: "Do they help men to find that nature is good?" This specification is a general but by no means a simple one.

Everything else may be important but it remains peripheral. McCulloch calls for an atmosphere of mutual respect and cooperation within the university. Until the assumptions upon which the university is now based are questioned, his rallying cry in "The Community of the University" moves only the superstructure, not the nature of the college.

C.W. Gonick's point in his article entitled "Self-Government in the Multiversity" is a good one. He says that the recomposition of the board of governors or even its elimination does little or nothing positive as long as the first reason for the university's existence at all remains that of providing useful citizens with the skills and values necessary to manage our present society. Surprisingly he then asks for a guaranteed annual income for all citizens who want to stay in the university community indefinitely. The university does not operate in a vacuum, and it should never be too much to ask that thought in the university be correlated with action in the community. They must work together but what should be a fruitful interrelationship has been perverted and has led to over-specialization, fragmentation, and an elaborate con game in which students are duped into thinking that they are being educated and professors wrongly think that they are teaching anything.

If nothing else The University Game demands that we start asking the right questions. Once we do we can stop this stupid little student activist game of getting on the senate, gaining a seat on the board of governors, and sitting on some faculty council. The time for pseudo-victories as a resolution to pseudo-questions has past. We want answers to the real questions: "What is education?" How can we best get it? Until these problems of means and ends are raised the university remains what it is today - a sham - a technical training school masquerading as an institute of higher education.

OCA Principal at odds with lawyer over firing

TORONTO (CUP) - Ontario College of Art principal Sydney Watson is at odds with a lawyer over his actions in firing two instructors last week.

Vince Kelly, Q.C., called in by the Ontario Union of Students to study the case of two drawing and painting instructors fired from OCA last week, claims Watson does not have the power to fire them unilaterally.

Kelly claims according to their contracts with OCA notice must be given Education Minister William Davis before they can be fired.

But Watson disagreed. He said the interpretation "is not correct."

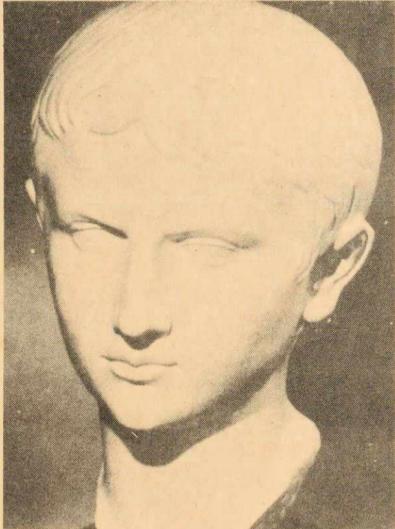
Davis executive assistant Clare Wescott said the minister has been in Chicago for the past five days, and claims there is no connection between OCA and Davis.

Watson remains steadfast in refusing to hire the two professors, Aba Bayefsky and Eric Freifield, who were both fired after supporting student protests against alleged changes to be made in the fine arts curriculum.

Watson charged last week Bayefsky called him a liar. Bayefsky contradicted him, claiming Watson told several of his colleagues changes were being planned but none was to speak about them. Watson denies the conversation.

Students have planned a boycott of classes this week, and are considering a march to the legislature.

Have you seen Augustus?



The Art Gallery Committee would be grateful for the return (or any information that might lead to the return) of the Head of Young Augustus, as well as a larger Head of Augustus - both of which were on stands outside the Art Gallery on the second floor of the A & A Building.

There are part of a collection purchased by the Gallery with money generously donated by a member of the Alumni.

CHANGE IN LOAN PERIOD - BOUND JOURNALS

After consideration of the replies to the questionnaires on periodical loan period which were circulated in the past two weeks, the Library has decided on a change in loan period on an experimental basis. Starting March 1, bound journals for the last five years (i.e. 1963-1967 incl.) will circulate for a one week period with no recalls and no renewals. Other bound journals will continue under the present regulations of two week loan subject to recall after one week and renewable once if not required by another reader.

In order to assess the validity of this new loan period, it would be most helpful if all borrowers would report to the Circulation Desk any difficulties which they encounter. This new loan policy will be reviewed at the end of term.



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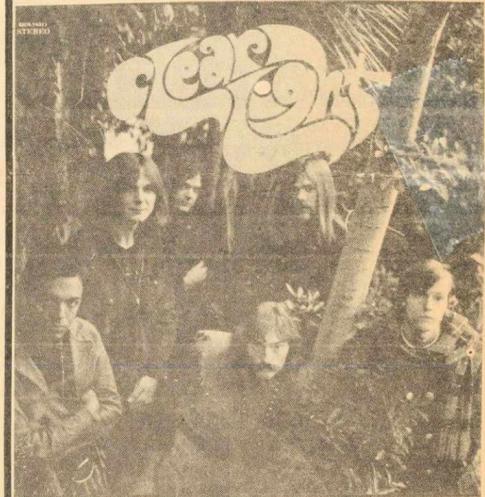
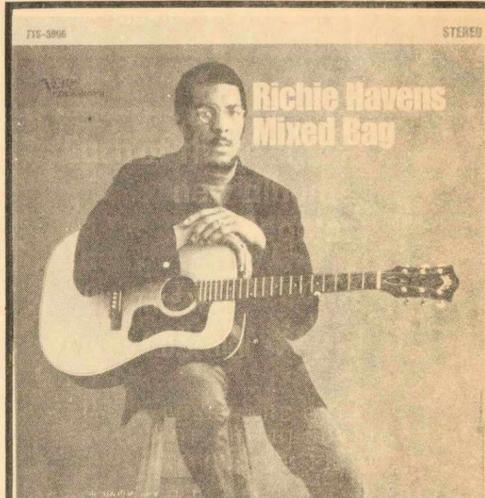
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