



climate and money:

the needs of graduate students

This article is reprinted from *Untitled*, a publication of the graduate students' association on campus.

by roger a. shiner

The Great University Battle is on; the big guns are arranged in opposition.

On one side are the governments, the administrators, the faculty; they have the power, the authority, the money. On the other side are the undergraduates; they have numbers as their weapon.

The graduate student is nowhere. It's lucrative being an administrator, it's romantic being an undergraduate. Being a graduate is something faintly distasteful.

No one stops to consider the role of the graduate student in the demand for more universities, more money, more degrees. Yet unless there are qualified persons with degrees at the Masters or Doctoral level, there will be no one to staff these universities, no one to spend the money or grant the degrees.

In a paper published in the p-B era (pre-Bladen, and how long ago that now seems!), Dr. Ernest Sirluck, Dean of Graduate Studies at the University of Toronto, stated that the university crisis in Canada is centred on graduate studies for this reason. Canada has always relied heavily in staffing its universities on persons who have not done their graduate research in Canada. In the last few years, of the new academic staff recruited, barely a half had graduate degrees from Canadian universities, and barely a half of them came directly from such institutions.

Now that the degree industry is expanding everywhere, other countries no longer have a surplus of trained academics for Canada to pick up.

There are two possibilities as a consequence. One can accept that the staff-student ratio will worsen rapidly; this however would be disastrous, even though one new university (no names, but it opened this fall in B.C.) appears to think it intrinsically valuable.

The alternative is for Canada to accept full responsibility for training its own academic staff.

One thing this entails is luring back up those who have crawled or even sprinted away down the brain drain by offering better working conditions.

Here one imagines the Hon. Minister of Education in Alberta leaping to his feet and pointing out that Alberta spends more sheer dollars on education than any other province. One must acknowledge that the 1956-66 pay scale figures published by the CAUT show the U of A as offering overall more money than any other university in Canada.

But Alberta is as good a place as any to find out that money isn't everything. I quote Dr. Sirluck:

"This is a problem less of money than of attitude—because the academic community, as it matures, becomes more and more a community, because its members live more and more in and for it, the need to make the academic condition in Canada more competitive

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comprehends the need to permit membership of this community to become more responsible than it has hitherto been allowed to be, with increased participation in the government both of its own affairs and of its relations with the larger community which is steadily becoming more and more dependent on it."

This is the lesson to be learned in Alberta. It is not a matter of direct control of hiring of staff or of content of courses by the powers that be; no government would be so crude.

It is the creating and condoning of a climate of opinion where there is repeated conflict between academic and political interests.

It is thus no proof of an absence of coercion than no one has been explicitly sacked from the faculty for using "Edge" or some similar offence. A climate of opinion is something that is felt not documented. Money is not enough when those ultimately responsible for the university express disguised and on occasion open hostility to the interests of the academic staff.

It is not an attractive situation when the only voices to be heard in each quarter, the government, the community at large and the university, are the voices of irresponsible fanatics.

Although the graduates on this campus are affected by the climate, since they have to teach and study in it, they are more directly concerned with the other issues involved here, with what can be done for improving conditions in graduate schools in Canada, so that Canadians will not want to go outside the country even for research degrees.

This raises the question of what is the immediate need here for graduates.

The CUS has deemed that the abolition of fees is the way to improve immediately the lot of undergraduates. But this does not mean that the priorities are the same for graduates.

The graduate is a person who is beginning to settle down; he is more likely than not to be married; he is embarking on a program of work which involves less (but only just less) unthinking steamrolling of his studies through course work; he has detached himself somewhat from the degrading scramble for grades that characterized his undergraduate career.

There has already been once this year a painful reminder that graduates cost more per head to educate than undergraduates. All right let the universities have their fees in grateful acknowledgement of this.

But let them accept in return that the graduate is donating anything up to 5 more years of his life to the financial uncertainty of being a student, 5 years in which the experience and knowledge he gains will likely be used to the immediate advantage of the academic profession.

Let them accept that the graduate is often taking three courses, teaching a fourth and writing a thesis all at once.

Let them accept that any graduate is a good graduate—otherwise there

is something wrong with the administrative procedure to the graduate school.

Let them accept as a consequence of all of these points that the immediate need is for every graduate to be guaranteed an adequate minimum of financial support for the entire period of his graduate studies.

The resulting security which he, or she of course, will have cannot but result in an improvement of his contribution to the university, and that after all is something that a university should be interested in.

A responsible individual is more likely to give of his best in the atmosphere of trust and cooperation thus created, than in the pettiness and distrust of the principle of "If you're a good boy, I'll be nice to you and give you a fellowship."

I am not saying that the graduates have a natural right to such support, but that it is reasonable for them to demand it.

The suggestion recently made locally that all students should be paid a wage was greeted with storms of abuse.

If the undergraduate has a right to such a wage, the graduate has many times over such a right. The decision to remain in university to do graduate work is a vocational decision in a way in which the decision to start at a university in the first place is not.

Graduate work is a year round business.

It is time that authority accepted the responsibility that stems from this.

In fact, most graduates do get some money most of the time from somewhere, but that is not the point. There should be no question about such support being forthcoming and continuing as long as needed.

One can give a person a short term contract, if he has to have time to prove himself. But with the present pressure for admission to graduate schools, there is no excuse letting in students when there is a recognized doubt that they will be satisfactory.

Sometimes wrong guesses will be made, and the position abused, but that can happen in any profession at any level. If every full-time worker possessed no more job security than that given to the average graduate student, the prisons and mental homes would be full to overflowing.

Why is this peculiarly relevant to graduate studies in Alberta? Because, and I have no wish to deny it, this proposal will cost money to implement.

Alberta has as much money as it has oil, and that is a tidy sum. It is a major expense to build and maintain a first-class graduate school, but it is necessary to the survival of the universities themselves that the money be spent.

Hiring a consultant just to select patterns for chairs in the Cameron Library is unlikely to produce a good graduate school.

Guaranteed financial support very well might. The Province of Alberta has the money, so this proposal could be adopted.

But "could be" is not the same as "will be."



"So you want to complain about a professor?"

letters

ho! ho! ho!

To The Editor:

I wish to comment on the editorial in Friday's Gateway regarding "A Brand of Humor."

While essentially agreeing with the editor in that all racial "jokes" are in very poor taste, may I offer a few suggestions as to why jokes of this nature are being circulated throughout the city.

I do not believe that native born Edmontonians, and Canadians, for that matter, particularly want to see Canada turned into a Little Ukraine, Little Poland or Little America. I do not deny the fact that all immigrants are entitled to a new life in Canada, but when one can travel three blocks downtown and not hear a word of English spoken, save that of his own senseless muttering, one can't help wondering if They are out to Get Us. Through the settling haze of garlic I can just barely make out a country called Canada, where the cereal boxes are printed in Ukrainian (THEN in English).

I believe that the few remaining Nationalists of this country are somewhat disturbed to see a New World emerging in which not only English is not known, but also these creatures called Canadians. I don't believe that it is expecting too much to want to hear the language of one's own country spoken, however haltingly, wherever one goes.

I say let's keep the cultures confined to the Ukrainian Centres, Polish Halls and Scandinavian Centres.

Superuke, incidentally, only travels 500 miles per hour.

Pete Portlock
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demonstrations

To The Editor:

Having read Professor Mathews' letter, I feel a kinship with Floyd Patterson. I am extremely pleased

that the demonstrations spurred Dr. Anderson to his successful unseating of Mr. Hawrelak. Accepting this assertion of Professor Mathews', I am willing to concede that maybe the demonstrations did have some useful consequences after all, although I would hope that the lack of demonstrations would not have stopped his action. I am still unwilling, however, to accept the entirety of Professor Mathews' argument.

Perhaps I was not very, very concerned, but I did participate in the first demonstration. Being rather conservative in many of my attitudes, I was not very impressed by arguments proffered by some of the students supposedly instrumental in organizing the student demonstrations, and I stated my opposition to them. As they became more determined to demonstrate once again, I became more and more unsympathetic.

In regards to Professor Mathews' statement that relations were not strained with the citizens of Edmonton, I can only say that this proves that university professors and students travel in different circles. I definitely have heard scorn heaped on the entire university because of these actions by the majority of people with which I have discussed the issue.

When I first read the assertion that the professors and the students could not fail, my initial reaction was that the Alberta climate is certainly conducive to the birth of gods. Any action of man is surely subject to human frailty and error. The demonstrations may not have failed, but in my opinion, unenlightened as I may be, they did fail.

The entire question surely revolves around the validity, i.e. soundness, of the action. I do not question the legality of the actions, God forbid that I ever should, but I do question the soundness of the actions. Students do have an obligation to act, but I am questioning the methods, not the goals.

A. Brent Lawley
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