

People talk to people, ideas are shared and

How can we



THIS IS THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

. . . where knowledge is discovered, but not shared

By ALAN DOUGLASS

"Get a new angle on the bus strike," said the editor. "We go to the community with the Friday edition and we need something to interest our new readers."

I rode around for two hours on bus routes with no passengers. All the drivers hashed out the old issues, but they weren't interested any more, and neither was I. There was no story here. So I went to work.

After a while, there is a break. Work is over for a bit. So you go and talk to the secretary. Jean is fun to talk to. I've done it before: heard about her father, the alcoholic, how he tried to burn the hair off her mother's head, break all the windows in the house with an axe. Great stuff. Makes you mildly ill.

Jean: You know, Alan, I think you can really be happy after you're about 25, and you've got your house and children.

That struck me as being odd. Most 33-year-olds seem very nostalgic about their old school days.

Alan: You mean you never liked high school?

Then I kicked myself mentally as soon as the words were out. Of course. Her father. But she went right on.

Jean: I always was interested in school, and I got my grade 12—a lot of people didn't—and I would have gone to university, I think. But I wanted to get married and have children.

Pretty damn understandable. Find a home for once.

Jean: I always wondered what made my father like that. I wanted to take psychology, but you know how it is . . .

I did. Her husband got to grade 11. He's now a police constable. Plays hockey with the kids. A nice guy. But a wife can't walk out on all that and go to university.

Alan: You can still read the books, Jean. Jean: I'd never know where to start.

Alan: Oh, it's easy enough. Grab any survey text of junior psychology and start off with the basics. Like the environmentalists versus the geneticists. Take a look at the question of whether you're born to be an alcoholic or a psychopath, or whether your home life and the people you know are the forces that shape you that way.

Jean: Which is correct?

Alan: I think that's still up in the air. Especially since Richard Speck was given a medical acquittal in Chicago after he had killed those student nurses, solely on the grounds that he had an abnormal genetic makeup causing psychopathic behavior. There's so much to be done yet. Psychology and the social sciences are today about where medicine was in the 1600's.

Jean: It really makes you wonder. You know, my husband sees a lot of puzzling, horrible things in his job. Like a 14-year-old holding a shotgun on his whole family because his brother broke his model airplane. Or an old alcoholic crapping his drawers at 2:00 a.m. Then there's

the real queer ones, like a middle-aged man running down the streets while ripping off the bedsheets he was wearing. But I suppose those brains in the psychology department have answers to all of these.

Alan: No, I don't think so. They have a lot more information, though, and I don't think they'd be in such a rush to give up on these people.

Jean: But my husband would really like to help. He'd like to go to university and study the sociology and psychology courses on abnormal behavior, but he can't afford to leave the Force.

Alan: It's a bloody shame that a lot of the knowledge that has existed for years in university texts can't get down to the people who need to use it every day, like your husband.

Jean: No, Alan, he'd still be trapped, even with the extra knowledge. The laws are the trouble. I remember looking at my husband's law texts when he was in training school, and you wouldn't believe some of these laws. They must have come over on the Mayflower. How can you make a person a criminal because of something he can't control. They do that with homosexuals.

Alan: But that's just another case of not getting the right information to the right people.

Look at the Omnibus Criminal Code Bill that Justice Minister Turner put through in Ottawa. There's a case of a scholar and not a politician making laws.

Sure, the bits on homosexuality and divorce made a lot of news, but I wonder how many people realize how much other deadwood that bill cleaned out of the Criminal Code. But that bill was a real effort to get through Parliament. So many people were so prejudiced one way or the other about the "newsy" issues like homosexuality.

Jean: But the people who complained were just citizens like us. They all had a right to vote for their people in Parliament who went against the Bill, like Réal Caouette's party. The problem is that so many people are so stuck in their own rut. They couldn't care about who they vote for unless the man they elect will do something for them personally. Like Dief and the prairie wheat farmers.

Alan: You mean another case of not getting the right information to the right people?

Jean: Yes, I suppose. But how can you fix that? A lot of people are just naturally ignorant.

Alan: Are you an environmentalist or a geneticist when you say that?

Jean: My God, I guess psychology even steps in there, eh?

Alan: Not only psychology. How about the new educational system your kids are going through? Things like variable-rate learning so you don't keep slapping kids down because they learn slower than others, and so geniuses don't get bored. And then the new subjects coming up, like family life education?