

POLITICS ON CAMPUS

Parties lack originality, student support, but serve well as a popularity contest - Dave Jones

By DAVE JONES

At the beginning of an article such as this, the writer would do well to make his own political affiliations clear. By so doing he may escape to some extent the charge that he is using this column, and this paper, for secret and ulterior motives. Therefore, I shall say I do have a definite political commitment, to the New Democratic Party, but further, that I do not intend to write an article on this subject. I shall attempt to confine it to generalities, and mention of my own party will be the result of an unavoidable bias and because I know it better.

Party Favorites

This article is inspired by the recent banning of campus politics at Mount A, and prevailing sentiment on our own campus that the same should be done here. It is also brought on by the (to me) deplorable lack of interest on the part of students in this university in matters that are usually lumped together as politics. It is commonplace to deplore the apathy of the public in the West, and even more commonplace to call students the leaders of tomorrow. Yet these statements are both unfortunately all too true, and both have much importance in the situation of campus politics.

It is obvious that the students must lead tomorrow's society. Only they have the knowledge, and perhaps unfortunately the opportunities, wealth, and social standing to obtain these positions of leadership. Therefore it would indeed be unfortunate if the apathy in public affairs, so deplorably apparent in so many of the general public, should become prevalent on the campus. Unfortunately, this seems to be just what is happening. The turnout at meetings of campus political parties is always extremely small. Many, if not most students have little or no knowledge of the platforms and issues on which they are voting, and their decision is usually based on the decisions their fathers, and often their grandfathers, have made in years gone by. How often do we hear the statement that so-and-so voted Liberal (or P.C., but not yet NDP) because their father voted that way.

Recently, we saw that this apathy is recognized off campus when a leading political personage took 10 minutes to say absolutely nothing beyond a few

well worn jokes and cliches. This is certainly indicative of the respect in which college students are held.

Finally, there is the movement to rid the campus of politics completely. This should be a certain cure for an already bad situation if absence indeed makes the heart grow fonder!!

We Get Letters

Although it is easy to blame the average student for this lack of interest, I think the real responsibility rests with the political parties, both campus and parent bodies. The campus bodies have allowed their clubs to become cliques, with a few making the decisions and real effort to explain the issues of public policy to the average student. Their platforms present complicated issues in a simple light and provide pat answers which usually show little originality.

These are interspersed with matters of great importance: "We promise to bring in Sunday skating" or "We promise to wash the canteen cat". These obviously will have global significance. Further, the elections are run on lines similar to a large popularity contest or the election of an American President. Small platforms are mailed to students, and with luck, a few discussion groups are held, leaving most students as much at sea as before. There is no sustained program of public education beyond this. The parliament itself can be held to be little more than a farce. The parties even have trouble filling their seats.

The parent parties record is no better. A few speakers are sent, a few delegates are sent to conventions (usually from the chosen few at the top), and the literature

which is occasionally haphazardly distributed show little imagination, and usually repeat the same line ad nauseum. Even the occasional speaker often does little more than insult the intelligence of his listeners. It would seem that these organizations have little use for any real discussion of the complicated matters of public policy on the campus and would be satisfied if a few parroting voters can be produced from the institutions of higher learning, a laudable objective indeed.

Use Your Imagination

To this abysmally mediocre approach, the student turns aside in disgust and boredom. Politics on campus become the preserve of the few, and little is done to enlighten the prospective voter beyond the short ratrace of elections. These factors are, I submit, the cause of the quagmire into which campus politics have fallen. It would seem that this situation can only be remedied by the efforts of the various political organizations concerned, on all levels. A campus paper, like the Gazette, could be of great use, carrying the debate to the students - a debate which will, it is hoped, show more imagination and initiative in the future.

To ban campus politics or to mock them will do little to improve the situation. Canadian students do not have the immediate and interesting problems of students such as Greece, Turkey, Japan, Korea, or the African countries, but there are many problems demanding informed criticism and opinion. It will be vital for the future of our way of life that they receive this attention and the campus must be of prime importance in this process.

The Descent

Then I ascended and saw stars in their stillness,
 Deep purple space still and unchanging
 Even as my country and heart.
 I took from there hope that nature was with me,
 Holding on tightly I descend to the crowd;
 They rub and tear hope, trying to dislodge it:
 I cried - fear, to be destroyed by their torpid expression,
 Hope will pass from you, buried under excretors.
 Fear their endless survival of species,
 Their growing more numerous, their groaning of bellies
 Ever to be filled with the morality of nations,
 What don't they eat, these endless dung makers,
 Why do they groan, creating laws while digesting?
 Endless regulation of nature now in them:
 Flush them away, this creation of man.

- J. Barker

THE CABINET OR THE COURTS

"... And there you shall hang by your neck until dead. May God have mercy on your soul."

When Robert Raymond Cook paid the supreme price for the murder of his father, once more the question of capital punishment was brought sharply into focus.

Perhaps the most significant thing is that Cook was executed at all. Of the forty-odd murderers who have been convicted since the present Cabinet took office, approximately 80 per cent have had their death sentences commuted to life imprisonment.

The Cabinet has unlimited authority to extend mercy, and in recent months has been using this authority to its fullest extent to conform to present public opinion on exercising the death penalty. However, there is no evidence that the majority of Canadian people are in favour of establishing the Cabinet as a permanent judicial tribunal.

A compromise is desirable.

Murders can be classified into two broad groupings; premeditated, and unpremeditated. It is for the former type only that the death penalty should be retained. Although many persons will quote statistics to the contrary, it is inconceivable that the risk of meeting one's Maker could fail to deter at least a number of potential murders. It is in saving these lives that capital punishment finds its justification.

To those that point out the danger that innocent people may be punished if the death penalty is maintained, it is submitted that the force of this danger is of a lesser magnitude than the benefit society will derive from its deterrent effect.

On the other hand, there can be no practical reason whatsoever for executing those convicted of unpremeditated murders. These are crimes of passion which are inherent in mankind. There is no element of deterrence whatsoever because these murders are committed in the heat of the moment, and the killer fails to think at all of the consequences.

In 1957, the British House of Commons, in a "free" vote, passed a bill which Canada would do well to adopt. It abolished the death penalty for "ordinary" murders, but retained it for special cases such as killing during robberies, while escaping from lawful custody, or while resisting arrest; murders committed with firearms or explosives; and second murders.

Although minor changes in this plan may be desirable, on the whole, it beneficially separates those who are compulsively dangerous to society from those who have suffered a temporary loss of control.

The job of the cabinet then, is to cease making arbitrary decisions of its own, and instead, introduce legislation to bring into effect the distinctions outlined above. In actuality, it has been making these distinctions itself in the commutations allowed so far. Now it must turn the job over to the courts, not only in the interests of uniformity but also to keep the administration of justice free from political overtones.

- GATEWAY

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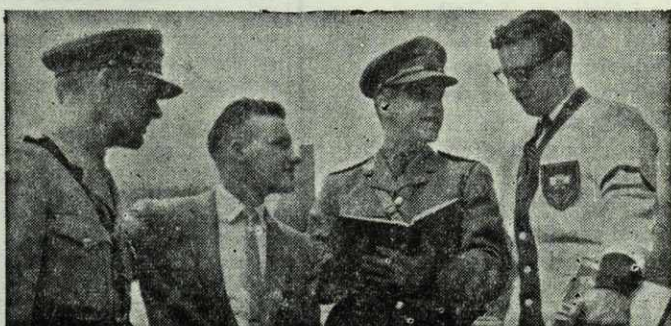
Here are four interesting and rewarding plans for young men interested in a career as a commissioned officer in the Canadian Army:



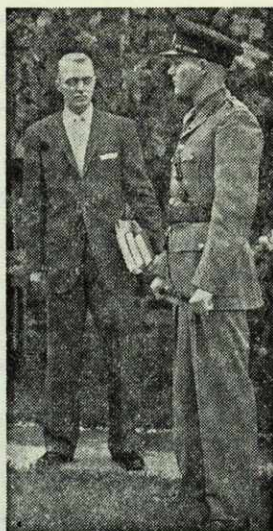
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THE REGULAR OFFICER TRAINING PLAN - This is a tri-Service Plan wherein high school graduates receive advanced education and leadership training at one of the Canadian Service Colleges or a university to become officers in the Royal Canadian Navy, the Canadian Army or the Royal Canadian Air Force.



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THE OFFICER CANDIDATE PROGRAMME - Selected high school graduates, not wishing to undergo academic training for a degree, may qualify as a short service officer after a brief intensive period of military training and later may apply to become a regular officer.

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