

# ... always acquaintances but never friends

## merely acquaintances

A Canadian student, Verna Weiss is registered in grad studies at U of A.

By VERNA WEISS

A foreign student met a Canadian girl at a party. She was curious; she also seemed interested in his opinion of Canadians: did he like Canadian dances? Canadian girls?

But two dates later he and his friend found themselves with little to discuss. He attempted a kiss, but she became distant.

The next time he telephoned she casually excused herself and hung up . . .

Another foreign student from a different part of the world was invited by a Canadian family to dinner. They liked him; he was asked again, and yet again.

The host's daughter and he

gradually became quite friendly. Invitations stopped . . .

Two incidents, important for their triteness.

Their significance lies in the fact they are typical of a pattern oft-repeated in the association of Canadian and foreign student; initial friendliness, followed by a period of extended acquaintance, and then—instead of the deepening friendship which would be natural in a relationship with a fellow Canadian—stagnation or withdrawal.

More often than not, our friendships with foreign students are either short-lived or superficial. Foreign students frequently observe they have many acquaintances, but not many real friends.

Why are meaningful friendships between foreign students and Canadians so rare? The answer is so obvious as to be overlooked

—the foreign student is different, an alien, not "one of us."

Beneath superficial friendliness, we continue to regard him as the Sartrean "other." We tend to look on him with interest, with curiosity, but when the chips are down, as an outsider.

While casual interest, curiosity and charity can support mere acquaintance, deeper friendship demands acceptance of the "other" as a subjective person.

Our tendency to think of the foreign student as an outsider rather than accepting him simply as another person is to blame for the poverty of associations between foreign and Canadian students.

The problem is that the foreign student is an alien. The solution to the problem lies in the replies to two questions.

First, is it possible to consider the foreign student as other than an alien? Secondly, is it desirable that he be so considered?

The answer to the question of whether it is possible to accept the foreign student simply as "one of us" would appear to be "yes."

It is not difficult to think of particular cases of foreign students who have made themselves so much as part of our cultural, political, even national life that there has ceased to be any gulf between them and their Canadian compatriots. What happens as the exception could conceivably become the rule.

But whether it would be desirable to merge foreign and Canadian students by eliminating the foreign student's status as an outsider is more debatable.

In defence of such a position, one might bring up considerations ranging from the alleviation of student loneliness to the promotion of world brotherhood.

But on the other hand, it may be argued both the Canadian and the foreign student would stand to lose much by incorporating the latter as "one of us."

In the first place, any sense of national or community identity we have would suffer.

Whatever being Canadian means, a large part of its consists in defining ourselves as "different" from non-Canadians.

This is true of any national cul-

ture; it defines itself by contrasting itself with those outside it.

The extent to which we affirm others as "aliens" is thus an index of the extent to which we feel our own national and cultural identity.

Those advocating the foreign student be integrated completely who find the prospect of diluting Canadianism less than appalling, must still meet a further objection.

The corollary of ceasing to regard the foreign student as "different" or alien is that we cease to pay attention to those national and cultural characteristics peculiar to the foreign student that so enrich campus life.

Should we then demand that the foreign student's place be changed from that of "the other" to that of "one of us"?

While it might eventually be possible, we stand to lose much by erasing those interests that now distinguish us.

But if we reject this solution, must we accept the fact that our associations with foreign students will not be very meaningful in any personal way?

Not necessarily. It is true we have in the past tended to regard the foreign student as primarily an outsider and as such have treated him with courtesy, interest and kindness but little understanding.

But it is wrong to suppose the only alternative to this is to assimilate him in our society.

A third approach lies in accepting differences frankly, but at the same time acknowledging, to a much greater extent than we have in the past, those things we share.

We need not eliminate or ignore our differences, nor forego narrow national customs or loyalties; we would be much the poorer for it.

Rather, we ought, while preserving differences, to shift emphasis from them to the things everyone shares—to think like the Vietnam question, or studies, or each other.

Such an emphasis will create a common ground firm enough to support more meaningful relationships between Canadian and foreign students; at the same time, preserved differences will add zest to the friendships thus formed.

## steel band plagued by critics

A student from the West Indies, Alfred A. Fraser, arts 2, is at U of A on a scholarship to study modern languages.

By ALFRED A. FRASER

During summer, some West Indian students formed a steel orchestra in Edmonton. They held their initial practice sessions at International House.

The entire neighbourhood with the exception of one man was enchanted with this magical music.

He was a most sophisticated gentleman who persisted in nagging the musicians. He told them they were disturbing the neighbourhood, and should stop practicing. When this failed, he appealed to the other neighbours to sign a petition to stop their practices.

When this failed, he called the police.

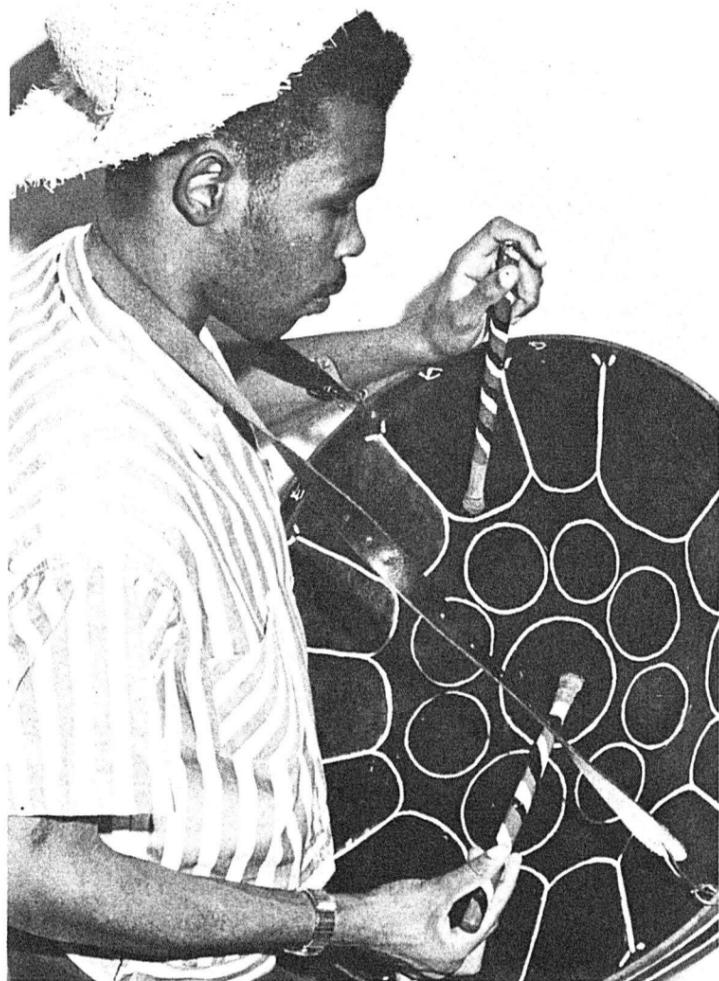
The police tried to establish compromise between the groups.

They got together and the man stated his objections. He said, "This type of music should be played only in the jungle where it belongs."

"This type of music drives the white man crazy."

The players protested very strongly at the implied insults.

Then one of the players pointed out the second statement was a confession of a change which had already been effected as a result of the music, whereas the first was in fact what the musicians had thought of in the first place when they decided to establish a steel orchestra in Edmonton.



ROLAND JOSEPH PRACTICES ON STEEL DRUM  
... not all sweetness and light for what is different