

Once Again With Feelies

by JOHN
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Present at many student conferences this summer was Alexander Chicherov, a professor of Indian History and an executive of youth organizations in the U.S.S.R. Chicherov discussed Marxism and modern Russia with a forthright honesty and frankness, contradicting the typical stereotype image of the representative of the U.S.S.R. as a thoroughly-indoctrinated machine grinding out the party line. Chicherov criticized the Soviet Pavilion as being an unfairly exaggerated view of Russia's progress since the Revolution. He was also sympathetic, though critical, of China's current "cultural revolution."

VANCOUVER (CUP) — A great, free-standing bulletin board at the tenth Canadian Union of Students' seminar. The ten-day conference started on August 20. After six days, the state-of-mind barometer was pinned up.

"On the spot report on the CUS seminar:

"The whole crowd has gleefully involved itself in voyeurism human relationships — playing freely and pretending to know people. Meanwhile people's souls drift and a girl cries alone for an hour and a half, and drunks insult singers, and people spread beer over someone's room and disappear leaving the mess, and Mrs. Pap runs around the lounge trying to clean up and saying we are the messiest people around, and the intellectuals run their vacuous ideas over the minds of the immature and hope to leave a dent for the party, and we need more structure. We need structure because people need ideas to go out and do things, to go out and change the world — what the world are we changing to?"

"Oh, but we have gone through the human thing, that's all over, everybody (anybody) loves everybody now and we are ready to act. To think, at least.

"I propose a plenary; I want to hear those who have the nerve to justify their humanity speak."

The note, signed Rick, described the situation at its worst. It's not talking about the whole seminar, nor was it a universal view at any time. But each participant has his own version of what happened.

At best, some serious work was done on the topic, Academic Reform: Facelift or Major Surgery?" Or, at best, some people learned about how their souls relate to other souls. There are 140 other bests, one per delegate. This account is not an at best or an at worst. Some of the names are real and some are not.

WHEELIE (noun) — A person who is concerned with political action and organizing, with power and functional change in society; a political strategist; adj., as in "the wheelie approach".

FEELIE (noun) — A person concerned with the individual liberation of people and one-to-one human relationships; a CYC volunteer; adj., used to define the character of one's "thing".

The seminar was agendaless, as was the ninth seminar at Waterloo. That knowledge created a universal idea at the start: "I'm not going to be blown by an unstructured situation. I heard about Waterloo."

There was a structure, the physical plant of the University of B.C.'s lower mall residences. Between Sherwood Lett house and Kootenay house, a concrete plaza is flanked by measureless lawns. Across the road is the Ponderosa cafeteria and regular meal times. Along a covered walkway, the common block lounge and Mrs. Pap's snack bar. Across the lawn and road the other way, down Lover's Leap trail, a virtually inaccessible, log-strewn, rocky beach. Sunshine very day, and a couple of city sight-seeing tours. And the bulletin board.

The Ponderosa has an outdoor south balcony where, the second day, a middle-aged professor and a predominately maritimes group tried to define education. Their definition included all the standard notions of creativity and intellectual awareness, leading to the expanding horizons of a man's knowledge. A gaggle of Vancouver hippies and a man in a red-and-blue jester's costume jingled in.

"Every man is a fool and I am the biggest fool of all. Are you a man or a fool?" he said, jangling his fool's bauble.

"Well, I'm going to university to try to learn to be something other than a fool," one replied.

"Umm. It is a wise man who knows he is a fool. I myself have a bachelor's degree. Have you heard about humpty dumpty?"

And while one fool expounded political realities to the professor, a beautiful blonde and bearded CYC volunteer spoke of the human soul and the need to be free, to do your own thing.

Three days later, the wheelies spoke with Blonde Beads in a lounge, long after midnight. Part of the recurring Russell-Warrian thesis on the future of 20th century man speculated on how people become politically active. "If one man is unemployed, that's a personal problem. If 15 per cent of the work force is out, that's a social issue. How are the connections made?" asked Russell.

Blonde Beads left the room, and the wheelies talked of the need to form political movements. When she returned, the problem was restated: "A man with three kids and pregnant wife is out of work and just evicted. He sits with his suitcase on the sidewalk. What would you urge him to do, or what could he do?"

She chewed her hair, thought a bit, and talked about the empty beaches on Texeda Island where one could live on oysters and maybe find an abandoned farm. For the wheelies, the feelies were thus made useless. But as Howard said earlier, wheelies are necessary to make the world safe for feelies. And, as somebody else said at the same plenary, what does it mean to be a wheelie and a feelie anyway, and what the hell, the categories are meaningless. People changed sides a lot, and many never took a side.

About here a medical student donned a string of blue beads and began to do his thing with the feelies. But he didn't know whether he could wear them back to anatomy class, and he rather doubted it. In question was whether or not people could learn ideas in an artificial seminar environment and still find them meaningful upon returning to the world. The question was not solved.

Down in beery room nine, the wheelies plotted world revolution, and on the lawn by the trees the feelies did their thing.

Interlude. "I really feel out of place here — we don't have any problems at our university."

"You mean the administration and the students always agree? On everything?"

"Sure. They're working in our interest, after all. The only thing people get worked up about is dormitory hours, and the system isn't too restrictive."

Interlude. "The administration on our campus has responded to student complaints by forming a batch of advisory committees. Our problem is what to do now."

"Sit one them and get the changes you want made, made."

"But they're stacked with administration people."

"So sit on them and work to expose them as powerless."

"That's what we tried to do, but they instituted a pile of minor reforms and claim to have okayed all our demands."

"Why don't you go back to the protest forms of action and force them to do what you want?"

"Yes, but that didn't work before either. We just don't have the student support."

"Why don't you get out and build that support, then, with issues the students can be con-

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