

The mayor, police chief look at us

They talk about relationships with the community . . . and drugs

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University students, professors, and members of the administration love being told what they're like, what to do, what is wrong with the way they do it, and how wonderful the whole happy crowd is. The only trouble with this is that it is other university students, professors, and members of the administration who do all the telling.

For once, it is time for us to see ourselves as others do—as the outside world thinks of the university. As the saying goes, if you want to find out something, go to the top, which is why the comments of Edmonton's Mayor Ivor Dent and Chief of Police Fred Sloane are presented here.

They were in agreement on major point: university students should do their own 'thing'.

Mayor Dent was at first hard-pressed to make any judgments on university students, a topic outside his usual scope of thinking. Relaxing with a cup of coffee at the end of the afternoon in his sunlit office, he considered the problem. Finally he said, "The university student ought to behave as he feels, as he is motivated to behave."

Does he make a greater contribution now?

"If he chooses to study," Mayor Dent continued, "for him it may be a good thing. The vast majority doesn't do that. They become involved in the community—they profit, society profits. But whether he later makes a greater contribution because he studies now, I don't know."

Police Chief Fred Sloane welcomed the opportunity to air his views on students. He conceptualizes young people in much the same manner as the Mayor. "I can't personally believe everything is black and white, and that the young people are going to hell," he said. Speaking in the modern colloquialism he added, "I suppose everybody has to do their 'thing'. 'Youth is impatient, and it should be. This is how we get advancement."

Mayor Dent's main concern was the university's relationship with the community. "The university has to be a part of the community it exists in—the more closely integrated, the better. Everyone should be good citizens, concerned with the problems of the community. Because of their capacity to think, the university student's concern is no greater, but the contribution should be greater. By contribution, I mean to the social, intellectual, and moral life of the community." He corrected himself, "Not exactly morals but various values that motivate human beings."

Leaning back in his chair he added, "American universities are much more integrated with the community than up here. There is a greater understanding of what goes on than there is here."

The Mayor suggested that perhaps this was because the news media takes a greater interest in transmitting information to the public.

Relations between university and community

He also expressed regret that the university was not playing as important a part as it should in its relations with the rest of the community, and he attacked those who pretended a concern.

"Much of the examination of society is superficial, momentary, and not too profound," he said "The visible, vocal group is very often quite superficial. The profound, academic, quiet-study of society which is good is usually not so dramatic. You don't need to be a professor to be profound. Students quite often do this, especially in graduate school, said Mayor Dent.

He turned around and poured another cup of coffee from the caraffe on the cabinet behind him. As he settled again, he diverged for a moment. "I believe in examining reality. For too many years, particularly in the social sciences, we looked at what we said exists and not what really does."

"Is 'student power' a good thing?"

Total student control is too much power

The Major wasn't certain but finally said, "It depends on whether in fact they (the students) have the capacity to realize there are others from the university who have ideas, and whether they have the capacity to act rationally within this recognition. Young people have the idea that over a certain age, others have no good ideas. They're blinded to the reality of the world."

"Some do have this capacity to examine the world and see it as it really is. This realization is important in any social system," he said.

Mayor Dent doesn't agree with total student control. This is too much power, he said abruptly. There are people with wisdom and ideas whose voice in decision making must be heard with realism.

The police headquarters was impressive from the outside, but once inside it was a confused muddle of policemen and carpenters. In the sanctum of the police chief's office, the atmosphere was calm and friendly, not reflecting the efficient activity around it.

Police Chief Sloane sees the present youthful trend to revolution as depending on the outlook towards authority. "We rebel against those who tell us what to do and how to do it, until we achieve this status and become part of it. Then we don't react in the same."

"The funny thing is that we all went through it," he laughed.

He was adamant about violence and student riots. "I can't as a person accept violence as such—violent overthrow of the law. I don't think it a happy situation when university students try to put down the establishment by force. That achieves nothing of significance.

It doesn't demonstrate who is the better, except in only one area," he said agitating the papers on his crowded desk.

Drugs are an evasion of the realities of life

"We must use the intellectual abilities we possess and achieve things by reason," he stressed. He also emphasized that students were merely part of a passing scene in the university and provision must be made to preserve a permanent, responsible structure.

Mr. Sloane is greatly concerned with the rising illegal drug use rate. "It worries me that young people destroy themselves," he said, looking at the problem not only as a policeman but also as a person concerned for human life.

Leaning forward attentively he thought about it a moment, then said, "The use of drugs appears to be an evasion of the realities of life which exist in the mind of the person. But taking drugs is really only like sleeping—the problem is still there when you wake up. If people do it for this, they escape only temporarily. The problem is still there."

What may be serious, he feels, is whether drugs have a debilitating effect on the physical being. If so, this leaves the person even less able to cope with his problems. The difficulty with drugs is that it could be a long time before their harm is recognized. By then it might be too late and the

person will perhaps feel no concern, he won't care anymore.

Mr. Sloane compared it to a girl becoming unexpectedly pregnant. It starts out as something for pleasure, I'm sure, he said. But then she finds she is pregnant and there is no going back. If this irrevocable nature is true of drugs, "it's a fool's errand when we engage in this sort of thing," he said seriously.

"If it is being done as a recreation (not as an escape and without physical debilities—so be it. But the law forbids it," he said shrugging his shoulders. Mr. Sloane could be considered almost sympathetic with those taking drugs, but feels that less harsh drug laws are not the answer at present. He says, "until we can demonstrate significant values in the practice or use of drugs nothing is to be gained by less restrictive laws."

Drug peddlars — they don't play favorites

He sees drugs as affecting people differently. "There are strong-willed and the weaker, but how do I distinguish them. This is the problem as I see it. It's the devil's own chore," he said with a smile.

Mr. Sloane was quick to indicate the drug problem is not specific to the university, but rather to that age group and since there is such a concentration of them the problem tends to be accentuated. If another group of the same age were to be found the same problems would exist there also, he said.

In many cases, drug use is a question of identity with the group—"to do the 'in' thing". If someone associates with a group of drug-users this is the direction he will take. Mr. Sloane distinguished drug-users into those taking drugs in secret unknown to the group, and those taking them openly who others will want to follow. He added, "Then there are those who are buying and selling to make a buck. They're not out to do any favors, never have and never will."

His voice turned harsh and cold as he said, "I've seen people die from drugs and believe me, it's not pretty."

If there are no rules, how can you play the game?

The drug problem in Edmonton is on a rapid increase and at a par with the rest of Canada. Mr. Sloane estimated that the increase as one of about 200 per cent.

He flicked on his intercom and checked on the exact statistics. In 1966 in Edmonton there were 17 arrests for illegal possession of drugs; in 1967 there were 77; and in 1968 there were over 200. The size of the morality division has been increased to cope with this. The problem is spreading rapidly to the younger age groups. He cited a case where a 13-year-old boy had been arrested for peddling drugs.

Mr. Sloane compared laws in society to rules in a game. "If there are no rules in a game, how can you play it?", he questioned. He fears this could produce increasing unreliability in society.

Mayor Dent added a complementary touch. He doesn't see the students at U of A as being apathetic. He said, "I've met many who have a profound concern and knowledge for this community and world affairs. They haven't joined together with those who can't do anything about the situation, and raised hell. If that's what you mean by apathetic, I suppose they are," he submitted.

He added emphatically, "Acting responsibly is not being apathetic, and I think they're a pretty doggone responsible group."