

Student power: the myth and the reality

by Mike Snook

What is student power? Who has it? For that matter, who wants it?

English Canadian students are picking up a phrase that is now 27 years old for European students and 12 years old for the Quebecois. That phrase is the new political toy 'Student Syndicalism'. It's become the ideology of the Canadian Union of Students in a world that tells us all ideologies are dead, including God, President Johnson, and Cassius X.

One View - Syndicalism

The basis of syndicalism ideology is: the student is a young intellectual worker, and thus deserves the rights and rewards of any other producing worker in a functional corporate system; there is no student problem, there are only student aspects of already existing social problems.

Within this ideology the students must be given total freedom of thought, expression, and action. He is held entirely responsible for his own actions, and is the only judge of his needs.

It follows then, that university and student administrations should resist any temptation to bring pressures to bear on the individual student to curtail this freedom. All this is, of course, within the boundaries of the laws of the land. The student is a young adult, with full rights to a future which will allow him to take over, and change, if necessary, the society into which he has been born. He has a right to influence social institutions, and the responsibility to examine all the cultural values of his society.

As an intellectual, the student has a right to those conditions which allow for freedom of and development of the mind. He has a right to draw the attention of society to its cultural life. Hence student demands for abolition of fees, students' salaries, cultural centres, fellowships, libraries, membership in the academic senate, and on the board of governors, the university's financial dictators.

As a citizen of a democratic university, the student must defend liberty under all circumstances, and must do, not what is necessarily best for him, but for society.

Syndicalists believe students are an integral part of the university community. They have a right to know what is going on, and an obligation to find out--thus their demands

for open decision making.

Student syndicalism is a serious and detailed ideology. It is not anti-bureaucratic, anarchistic, or generally irresponsible. These are folklore myths which tend to surround any new, or revolutionary (in the intellectual sense) philosophy. The student syndicalist has more urgent tasks to perform than to lose himself in secret meetings, code words, or purges.

Second view - Democratic Society

Students for a Democratic Society is the newest version of the 'New Left'. There are roughly 200 chapters spread over the U.S.

Its philosophy centres around two objectives: 'We seek the establishment of a democracy of individual participation governed by two central aims. That the individual share in those social decisions determining the quality and direction of his life; that society be organized to encourage independence in men and provide the media for their common participation.'

A true student voice in the running of the university will not be accomplished by membership on various committees as is now being attempted. These committees are of the administration which seek to curtail the influence of students. Student members of these committees do serve a purpose in the eyes of SDS: they become disenchanted, and later demand true representation.

Draft resistance is one manifestation of the SDS confrontation of authority, in this case the political and military élite. Draft resisters are not urged to come to Canada by SDS, because in so doing, they lose the chance for confrontation. This is dodging, rather than resistance.

Even computers can't cope with the new radicalism springing up on the American campus. Why? They're being programmed by men who have no feeling for the very movement they are trying to analyze. The result is inaccurate knowledge and thus inaccurate programming.

The CUS View

So what are Canadian students doing about this confused state of affairs? CUS, for instance?

CUS President Hugh Armstrong announced that the Canadian Union of Students will use some of its members' money to publish a student news magazine. The Issue will appear twice in 1968, as a prelude to monthly publication in '69.

Though published by CUS, the magazine will be editorially independent.

The magazine will attempt to perform the role of a proponent of reform and alleviation of social problems and education.

The York View

And how about home at York? Well, we have the Vietnicks, who have held at least one numerically successful demonstration, against Hawker-Siddeley. We are members of CUS, and we have the college system, which is supposedly to protect the freedom of the individual and guarantee him an identity which he would have no where else in a multiversity such as York is destined to become.

And we have more. We have an aware administrator in the person of President Murray G. Ross, who in a statement earlier this year warned against public demands that would lead to a lack of academic freedom within the university itself. Because the university is dependent for its existence on public and private funds, there is a real danger of outside manipulation. Indeed, most of the pressure that is brought to bear on student radicals of all forms, is a result of economics. Who within the conservative and monied corporate class is willing to give money to a university that condones hippy-like behaviour?

So really, what is the point of student power, in the form of Syndicalism, or of that taken by SDS? We don't have the financial power, so what can we do on the concrete level?

What have we done? We do not yet have student senators on either Campus, although they have been approved in principle; we do not have members on ACSA, the advisory committee on student affairs which is closed to the press and public, and out of which the first two Glendon representatives coolly walked.

President Ross has called York an 'academic community', which in the non-Communist world connotes a democratic sharing of privileges, rights and responsibilities. Is it the big ideal? Or is it 'The Big Lie'?

And he is wearing golf shoes

by Jay Sonley

It is as though you were on a journey through a series of five valleys.

The first valley is the valley of trust.

From the valley of trust you go into the valley of love.

From the valley of love you go into the valley of self-knowledge.

From the valley of self-knowledge you go into the valley of knowledge of another.

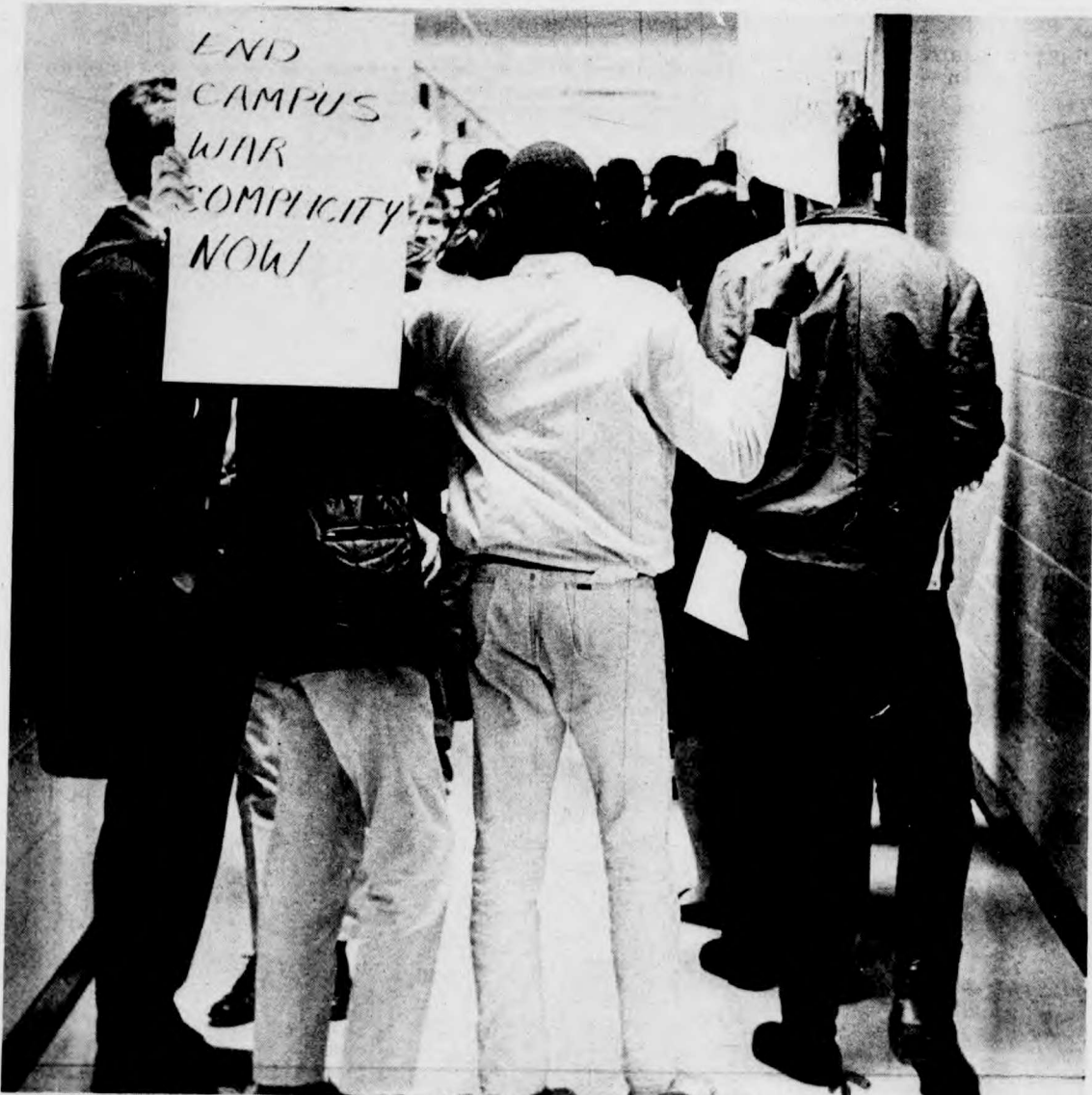
And from that valley you go into the valley of knowledge of another's knowledge of you.

Then you come to the base of a great cliff and you shake the sand of the valleys out of your sandals, and you scale that cliff, and you get to the very top, and you hang your fingers over the edge, and you look up, and then a great monster man appears, and he says to you; 'If you want to come up here on the plateau with me, I must stamp on your fingers seventy times seven times'.

And you must decide. And you have all the time in the world to decide, for he does not want to influence your decision one little bit. And you look at his feet and he is wearing golf shoes.

So you make that decision, and you endure that agony, and you get up on that plateau. Now, what do you do? This is the question you must ask yourself.

I am on the plateau. I cannot stand still. I must walk. I cannot walk in a circle. How can I walk and not walk off the edge?



YORK'S MOST ACTIVE GROUP OF ACTIVISTS - THE COMMITTEE TO END THE WAR IN VIETNAM AT A RECENT DEMONSTRATION AGAINST HAWKER-SIDDELEY OF CANADA . .

CUP conference: Objective news is a myth

Over 200 college journalists asked themselves 'Where are we at' during the 30th national conference of Canadian University Press.

Just what did they decide? To start with, they admitted objective reporting was a myth, and went on from there into what sort of slant a newspaper should take.

That slant should be any-

thing that fairly and accurately brings a greater awareness to the readers on matters of education and social problems.

As Lib Spry, CUP president aptly said, 'Student newspapers can no longer be simply announcement sheets for student council meetings and promotional issues for football games.'

Newspapers can be the only communication media on campus, and as such should challenge and interest the students. That condition is carried to the extreme here at York, in that Excalibur is the only unified, university-wide voice of student opinion at the present time.

- Dave Cooper.