

This university doesn't serve the people

BY THE STUDENTS FOR A
DEMOCRATIC UNIVERSITY
The University of Alberta

This article was written for the greatest part of Edmonton's population—the working class and the poor. Unfortunately only a few of those people will read it. Most of you who are workers won't be getting this paper because it is not set up for the workers and the poor. Like the university itself, this newspaper is mostly set up for the people up there—the bosses.

We are writing anyway because we want to start a dialogue with even a few of you about the set-up of the university. We want to begin to explain our view of how the university is set up for the bosses. We want to talk with you about how to make this university serve the needs of the people.

If this dialogue is to continue in these pages, this paper will have to change. It will have to change what it does and what it talks about. It will have to change who it talks to and who reads it. It will have to talk about the people's problems. It will have to provide space in which the people can talk about their problems. And it will have to be put into the hands of the people—not sold to the bosses and their friends.

This newspaper must be distributed at the factory gates. It must be distributed in the labor union halls, and handed to you at the unemployment centres, the welfare centres, and the native friendship centres. It must be distributed free to the people when they cannot afford to buy it.

These are our first demands, we want to start talking with you about the university.

Through history the universities have been used to train the sons and daughters of the bosses. In recent years as the big corporations have grown, the universities have trained more and more people from the middle classes to work in these corporations and do the bosses' work in the interests of the bosses. The universities have never worked for the people. And the universities don't work for the people today; they work for the bosses.

The whole school and education system is set up to make sure that the interests of the bosses are served. For instance, they have to make sure that some people will work in the factories, that some others will learn to be carpenters, mechanics etc., and that a smaller number will get to the universities. The ones who get to the universities are going to learn how to manage the big corporations. Therefore the

bosses want to make sure that the children who get to the universities are mostly their own children.

So they set up "tracking systems" in the public schools and in the high schools. The tracking systems immediately push the sons and daughters of the workers and the poor into vocational and commercial programs at the beginning of high school. And the tracking systems let the sons and daughters of the bosses and the middle class into the academic programs in high schools so that they will be ready to take their privileged places in the university.

Now what are some of the things that show how the university is set up to serve the interests of the bosses?

The university doesn't teach about the workers and the people and how they live their lives. The university doesn't teach about the people's needs. There is a commerce department at the university to train managers for the bosses. But there is no labor movement school at the university to teach about workers' struggles and to provide a place for the sons and daughters of the people to learn about these struggles. The situation is the same right through the schools.

The sons and daughters of the people will never learn in the bosses' schools about the struggles of their parents. There is no history of the labor movement taught in the schools. The workers' children will never hear in the schools about the Great Strike in Winnipeg after the First World War. They will never learn about the struggles of the Depression times on the farms and among the workers. They will never hear of the One Big Union in the west. They will never learn how workers were shot down during the Depression in Estevan, Saskatchewan.

The people's children will never learn in the schools or the university about how their parents see the struggles of today. About why the farming people cannot sell their grain. About why the workers must strike the transit system, the postal system, the construction industry, the oil sands plant at Fort McMurray to get their proper wages from the bosses.

What they DO teach at the university is how to serve the interests of the bosses. In science young people learn to do research that will make a bigger profit for the bosses. If young people learn social sciences like psychology, sociology and political science, they are taught to be spies for the bosses. Sociologists and psychologists and political scientists are always studying the workers and especially the poor and the native people and asking them questions. And when they

find things out about the people, the social scientists go to the bosses with the information. The social scientists never study the bosses and give the information to the people. And the bosses are always using the information they get about the workers and the poor and the farmers and the native people to come up with new ways to shove the people around.

And in the education faculty, young teachers are told to teach the things that the bosses want people to learn. Young teachers do not learn to teach children the history of the working class or the native people or the struggles of the farmers. If they become doctors or lawyers at the university, the young people still don't learn to serve the needs of the people. For the most part, the doctors don't learn to serve the poor. Many of them learn to serve the rich, who can pay for all their extensive services.

Lawyers aren't trained especially to help workers and the farmers and the poor. They quickly learn where the best money is to be made, and they work there—for the bosses on other big company boards of directors.

There ARE important and necessary things taught in the schools, of course. It is obvious that everybody today has to learn how to read and write, and those things are taught in the schools along with the other basic skills. And people must learn their trades and become competent in their chosen trades if they are to do their work well.

But the things that aren't taught, the things talked about above, are important too. The trouble is that even when the people's sons and daughters know that they are being taught a lot of phony things in school, they can't do much about it.

Right through school and training, the sons and daughters of the people are threatened and frightened by their teachers so that they won't have time to ask questions about their parents' struggles. When they are very small, the children are threatened with the strap and their teachers yell and shout at them when they show that they don't want to learn the bosses' curriculum. And when they get older, the people's children are threatened that they will be thrown out of school if they don't learn the bosses' curriculum.

This is supposed to be for discipline reasons.

But it is also true that the bosses NEED many of the workers' sons and daughters to go right into the work force from junior high school or high school. And the bosses NEED other sons and

daughters of the people to go into the training and vocational schools because the bosses need them to get trained to work at certain jobs. Still other young people go to the technological institutes like NAIT and SAIT, again because the bosses need them to learn certain things. And all the while, the sons and daughters of the bosses and part of the middle class are heading for the privileged places in the university.

Some sons and daughters of the workers and the small farmers and the poor and the native people DO get into the university along with the children of the privileged classes. But these token few must still learn the bosses' curriculum. There is nothing taught at the university about their parents' struggles, because the university belongs to the bosses.

And the university belongs to the bosses even though the people are paying for it with their taxes. The workers and the small farmers pay for the university with their taxes, but many of their children never go to the university. The children of the people who do go to the university are taught that their parents' struggles are unimportant.

When the university is changed by the people and the students so that it serves the needs of the people, things will be different.

The sons and daughters of the people will not stand for the things that go on in the university now.

The sons and daughters of the people will protest when their teachers tell them labor struggles are subversive.

They will protest when they are taught that the government is right to interfere with the workers' struggles.

They will protest when they are told that wage increases cause inflation.

They will insist that the university be a place for the sons and daughters of the people to learn about the people's struggles.

They will insist that the social scientists stop spying on the people.

They will call on the teachers to stop frightening and pushing around the students.

They will tell their teachers that the workers know best how to make better machines, because the workers are the ones who use the machines.

They will say that the farmers are the ones who know what is needed on the farms.

They will ask why the workers and the farmers do not teach in the university, since they are the ones who know the problems best.

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