

the foreign student

Twenty years ago the United Nations Organization was formed to help spread understanding among the peoples of the world.

Canada was one of the most vocal supporters.

This month, the United Nations is celebrating its anniversary. Have Canadians been true to the ideals they proposed?

Are they really warm and friendly? Or perhaps our friendliness is something superficial.

To answer these questions, Elan Galper, med 2, asked several foreign students to give their reactions to life in Canada. He also asked a Canadian student to examine the situation.

an offer of talent

A graduate student in zoology, Desmond Anthony is also president of Club Internationale. He comes from British Guiana.

By DESMOND ANTHONY

In recent years, a steadily increasing number of foreign students have been arriving at U of A.

Last year, 312 students from 67 different countries were registered. Among these were 229 graduates from 50 different countries.

This year a total of 509 from about 70 different countries have registered. Of these, 433 are graduates who have come from 56 countries ranging from Australia to Zambia.

There can be no doubt, therefore, that our campus is international.

Of what consequence is this influx of students, most of whom have come from the less-developed regions of the world?

The significance to the countries from which these young people have come and to which the overwhelming majority will be returning on completion of their studies, immediately comes to the fore.

But what is not so readily obvious are the returns which Edmontonians can derive from these students during their sojourn here.

No one will convincingly argue against the wisdom of educating foreigners at Canadian institutions whose programs are geared mainly to meet the needs of Canadians.

But many will hesitate to accept the idea that the foreign student can have a useful influence on this community.

Foreign students have brought a variety of customs, traditions and talents to our campus and to our city. If proper use is made of these assets, the result can be rewarding.

As hosts, Edmontonians should show their finer qualities to their guests, bearing in mind that they will be remembered either for the experiences which have been most distasteful or those which have been most pleasing.

Canadian students and residents of this city should therefore try to know the foreign student better, and to understand

and appreciate the factors which have fashioned his outlook.

The foreign student, on the other hand, should try to meet other people from many social levels.

He certainly has something to give, and he undoubtedly has much to gain through his association with local residents.

However, it is not, always easy for foreigners to make friends among local people.

Nor is it less difficult for local residents to meet foreign students who remain cooped up within the narrow confines of their own little groups, protected from the "hazards" of meeting and mixing with people of different backgrounds.

Many local residents who are desirous of meeting and establishing friendly relationships with foreign students, do not know how to reach them.

Others feel that because they or members of their family are not university trained, they cannot be acceptable hosts for foreign students.

At this point, Club Internationale enters the scene. This organization can serve as a central exchange for communication.

The club is not for foreign students only. Membership is open to all—student or non-student, foreigners at Canadian institutions foreign or Canadian alike.

The result of this policy is that 50 per cent of our membership is Canadian. In this way it is hoped that the channels for mutual understanding and lasting friendship will flow more freely than they do in the general community.

Being non-religious, non-political, and non-profit-making, but social, cultural, and cosmopolitan, it is obvious that practically no barrier to genuine fellowship exists.

The club is a shining example of people dwelling together in unity despite diversity of origin, background, and customs.

Indeed, the crossroads which lead to our campus from different parts of the world meet at Club Internationale.

a polite veneer

Franz von Heurenberg is in grad studies. He comes from Austria.

By FRANZ VON HEURENBERG

Canadians are peculiar people.

Perhaps they do not seem so to themselves, but they do to outsiders, like me.

Canadians have always been noted for their broad, inviting smiles. But what lurks behind that smile? Is it real friendships?

Yet, those people who smile at me so profusely on the street make no effort to know me as a person.

Are the many smiles we receive mere social deadwood à la "how to makes friends and influence people?"

I tried very hard to make friends among my fellow Canadian students.

I made many sacrifices to maintain and sustain those tenuous attachments—yet, I found because of my mannerisms, foreign accent and un-Canadian interests, I was considered socially "out."

Whenever anyone did try to approach me, he gave me the impression it was done merely out of pure courtesy.

The true friendship for which I have been yearning—the intimate union of souls—did not seem to exist.

The "friendship" with which I was showered seemed always to be of the "get-well-card" variety, seldom and real interest in me as a person, but rather, a polite veneer covering indifference and suspicion of anything different.

Thus I learned quite quickly when a Canadian said, "come and visit me anytime," he did not really mean it, and if I were to accept the invitation, my visit would be a resented imposition.

Only a few Canadians had the candour or faith in my ability to "take it," and were sincere with me about it.

Canadians pride themselves in their great informality, wanting to be on a first-name basis with one at the first meeting (which, when I first came here, I found a trifle irreverent).

Yet, they are among the most rigidly formal people that I have ever encountered in my world travels.

I found it surprising that I would be considered rude if I dropped in on an acquaintance by impulse. To me, to telephone and announce my arrival would remove any heartfelt spontaneity from our friendship and would establish it on a rigid protocol of dos-and-donts.

The North American obsessive, demon-like extroversion has, many times, left me puzzled.

In the great attempt to be socially popular, Canadians seem to be concentrating too heavily on the unintellectual.

For the sake of being well-liked one would listen for hours to radioed vomitus, and reject, because he does not wish to appear unpoplar

or sissy-like in the eyes of his associates, any good music.

Why one should waste so much time on Ian Fleming, because he is "in", while better books lay unread on the shelf, is something which I cannot accept.

And if I expressed these sincere statements when Canadians asked me, "What d'you really think about us?", they got insulted.

So we have a funny contradiction: on one hand, apparent frankness and openness; and on the other, coldness and puritanical formality.

This contradiction seemed to carry when I dated Canadian girls. We had little in common to start with, because, although they expressed great enthusiasm in trying to draw me into conversation (a very easy task—I am loquacious by nature), they had very little interest in what I was saying.

Their repertoire of topics seemed to be restricted to dresses, parties, football games, exams, and other people.

This, mind you, did not come from the girls on 97 St. but from university students.

Their knowledge of things which I consider important, things like art, music, literature, philosophy and even politics, seemed so minuscule, that the evening would be a waste of time for me, were the girls not so eager to see if a foreign student is up on the latest necking techniques.

The more I tried to know them as people, the more faceless they seemed, and the more like copies of an inviolable, eternal mold called "the Canadian girl."

And Canadian boys also seem too eager to follow a phony role.

They consider it unmasculine to take any interest in the finer things of life and try to act very materialistically, take an overexaggerated interest in sports and drink beer to intoxication.

But they are the least masculine mama's-boys that I have ever met. Shallowness of mind is the common characteristics uniting them.

If my views were a trifle harsh, forgive me, gentle reader. I am socially unenlightened.

I was brought up in a culture where truth is valued higher than one's ephemeral ego.

I know I tended to generalize, but even so, the mean may represent the greatest concentration of individuals in any given distribution, as the statisticians would say.

Of course, there are exceptions to the rule: of course, there are truly broadminded Canadians who can understand individuality, and even eccentricity, and do not scorn anyone for being different, and do not ask if a person is a Communist if he happens, like me, to have an accent.

There are exceptions—but oh! so few!



—Yackulle photo

THE BRILLIANCE OF A SARI
... Amrit Grover poses prettily