

## Cont from 11

the courts and the legal system (lawyers). More than four times as many students rate the courts as working well (44%) than the legal system (lawyers) (10%).

Another interesting observation centres on the "working well" outcome of the federal and provincial governments. Here, 23% say the federal government is working well, while 19% feel the same about the Ontario government. In terms of needing "fundamental reform" they are almost tied, with 47% giving that rating to the federal government and 46% for the Ontario government.

Students distinguish, too, between their assessments of the House of Commons in need of "fundamental reform," while almost three students out of four say the same about political parties.

A consistent - and for business, a consistently dismal - pattern emerges with respect to ratings for the economic institutions, major corporations and the oil companies. A bare 11% feel the free enterprise system is working well, while 76% think it needs fundamental reform. Advertising to consumers is rated low - 9% believe it is working well. Major corporations receive a mere 8% support for working well, while nearly eight out of 10 students think they need fundamental reform. Conspicuously at the bottom of nearly every student rating, the oil companies receive a scant 5% positive score for working well, while a full 84% see them as needing fundamental reform.

A 1974 Unimarc survey of university students revealed that 77% held a negative view of the conduct and performance of the business community in Canada. In this most recent survey, that proportion has risen to an alarming 89%. Significantly, 76% say that their attitudes toward major corporations have grown more negative in the past two years.

Students aim their suspicions at specific areas. A full 91% believe that the profit motive is causing more harm than good in society right now. More than seven out of 10 students blame major corporations for inflation, while 74% believe that corporations generally benefit from periods of high inflation and high unemployment.

Such figures, however, need to be placed in perspective. Students do not appear to be anti-profit per se. Eight out of 10 students believe that business should be entitled to make a reasonable profit. And small business emerges with a high degree of campus sympathy and respect. An impressive 79% welcome more support for small business, while a hefty 89% say "small business is better for the consumer than big business."

A distressingly low level of perceived credibility is at the heart of much student antipathy toward business. A mere 8% agree with the statement "on the whole, business tells the truth." Nine students out of 10 believe "corporations put profits ahead of the health and safety of their own employees and customers." A similar number feel "business executives will say and do anything just to get ahead."

In areas of advertising and social responsibility, major corporations believe that they have

become much more sensitive in recent years. This view is not shared by students. Only 7% believe "business is more socially responsible today than it was 10 years ago," and 93% believe "advertising manipulates more than it informs."

Though they show little regard for most major corporations, students still see them as among the most powerful institutions in the country. In assessing where the single greatest source of power lies in determining the direction and priorities of the country, a clear majority chose some area of big business. The largest single rating, 27%, went to "multinational corporations/major oil companies." "Major corporations" were next with 18% viewing them as the single most important source of power in the country, followed by "major Canadian banks" at 14%. Outside of business, 16% of the students regarded the media as being the single most powerful source of influence in the country.

Perhaps more surprising is the relatively low level of power accorded democratic institutions in the country. Only about one student in 10 sees the Prime Minister as being the single greatest source of power. The House of Commons receives a scant 4% for its influence in public affairs. Most alarming of all is the image of the "general public" and the "democratic process" as the most powerful individual forces in the country. Only 7% see the general public in this category, while a mere 3% regard the democratic process as the greatest single source of power in Canadian society.

In addition to being a telling commentary on the health of our

democratic institutions, these figures have important implications for the thrust of a good deal of corporate public communications. Business leaders repeatedly assert that major corporations are less and less the masters of their own fate, that they are increasingly controlled by outside factors and that government continues to hamper their ability to operate freely.

To members of the public such as these students, however, and those who share their views of where the real power in the country lies, such claims will have a hollow ring. Based on figures such as these, it would seem fitting that business consider a different tack in its public communications - one that would not demur at the thought of having considerable power but rather would exemplify and communicate how such power is being used in the public interest.

While the broad statistics infer a fairly generalized disenchantment with business, closer reading suggests some interesting exceptions. In evaluating which areas of business are working well and should be left alone, which need more government control and which should be broken up into smaller units, small business surfaces again with an impressive score. Nearly three students in four - 72% - say that small business is working well. A mere 3% favor breaking it up into smaller units. Airlines fare well, too, with 62% feeling they are doing a good job.

Problems arise fairly quickly, however, for key areas of business. Though nearly one third of the students say breweries are working well, 40% say they need more government control. This

should be an interesting revelation to an industry that is already concerned about "over regulation." Another piece of data with timely impact: 56% favor the break up of IBM into smaller units, though slightly more than one student in four say it is working well.

Still another major company with a vital stake in public opinion is Bell Canada. Fully 69% say it should be broken up, and only one student in 10 gives it favorable marks for working well. Only a slightly lower margin - 64% - support the breakup of Ontario Hydro. Nearly two thirds of our students believe that automobile companies, food store chains and major banks should be broken up into smaller units.

Mining and major oil companies fare worst in terms of job performance rating. In both cases, only 5% say they are working well and should be left alone. Students seem evenly divided as to what should be done about mining companies; 44% favor more government control and 41% say they should be broken up into smaller units. The most staggering figure, however, is reserved for the major oil companies - 83% say they ought to be broken up into smaller units.

Of all the areas of business sampled, the media received the most favorable ratings. Radio stations topped the poll; an impressive 84% said they work well. Television networks were next; 79% gave them positive performance marks. Major newspapers followed; 72% said they work well and should be left alone.

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