

An indictment of the Alberta Students' council

Council not interested "in educating the opinions of students" - property of administration

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The purpose of this statement is fourfold:

(1) To show that Student Council has failed to act on the basis of principles;

(2) To show that Student Council is the property of the administration, not the political vehicle of the student body. The consequence being that the interests of the administration are smoothly soft-pedaled by Council (the administration's voice to students) as the interests of students. Students do not have a "normal channel" for their interests.

(3) To show that Council is not representative, is not concerned with being representative, but yet uses irrational arguments concerning representation in order to avoid any true resolutions of major issues facing students;

(4) To show, that given the above council's conservative non-creative standpoint, council has not been and is not interested in educating the opinions of students and fostering greater student involvement.

SOME EXCEPTIONS

Some of these points can be best illustrated by reference to the remarks of Miss Pilkington—but then it is no secret to any who have attended Council meetings that Miss Pilkington's remarks represent a good number of those who sit on Council, certainly most of that majority which usually keeps silent. There have been notable exceptions (e.g. David Leadbeater and Boyd Hall) who at a minimum have at least managed to retain their integrity. It has been estimated that for every councillor who speaks once, Pilkington speaks four times (4:1) excluding the fact that she possesses a minimum of five "yes-men" councillors. In terms of motions, for every private motion brought up by individual councillors (usually Greg Berry prior to his resignation), Pilkington is the originator of 6 (6:1).

At the beginning of this year, in answer to repeated gallery demands that Council explain its continued refusal to entertain re-entering C.U.S., statements were forthcoming from Council that C.U.S. had taken stands on political issues not "directly" relevant to student matters, that such domains were not the proper business of Student Unions (i.e. not contemplated within its original scope), and that therefore C.U.S. could not purport to represent a

majority membership opinion in such matters—and in doing so (C.U.S. did not). C.U.S. had gone beyond its mandate. This position—the false dichotomy of matters directly and indirectly related to student concerns—has been repeatedly stated by Miss Pilkington, most notably at the November debate with Martin Loney, Pres. elect of C.U.S. It has been consistently employed to stifle and end relevant debate on such issues as C.U.S., the Student Bill of Rights, and the planned fund-raising campaign. In the face of this history, the attempt to separate the role of student from the role of citizen, Council on Monday, Jan. 20 passed a motion giving \$100.00 of Student Union funds to a just formed Native Peoples' Defense Fund for the legal defense of the oppressed native peoples of the Province of Alberta. This motion (which on its own we approve) was passed after only hasty consideration consisting of a short emotional appeal by Rose Auger and a highly indefinite and scanty presentation of the facts of the case. The passage of this motion (with but 1 vocal opposition) can be seen as nothing but a direct contradiction of Council's previously stated policy of non-involvement in non-specifically student affairs.

FINAL DECISIONS?

Another steadfast cry of this year's Council is that it cannot be expected to make final decisions without all necessary facts before it. This argument has been continually used to defeat or waylay forthcoming creative suggestions. Yet, on Jan. 13 Council approved a highly controversial fund raising campaign immediately after Council itself had admitted its lack of knowledge of almost all relevant facts and figures.

The approving decision was made on the basis of the unsubstantiated opinions of Miss Pilkington and Dr. Johns. It was decided that others could research the facts at some later date if they so decided. As usual, Miss Pilkington had events—their timing and their presentation—well enough coordinated to leave the large majority of her puppet council no role but that of a cheering section for total obfuscation. Once again Council acted on an important issue in a panicky ad-hoc manner—without necessary facts, without principles of substance, and in direct contradiction to previously enunciated principles of procedure.

We suggest that it is this type of confusion on Council's behalf that has resulted in Council's failure, contrary to the interests of students, to take any positive and creative stands. Examples are Council's support of the fund raising campaign and failure to look into preferable alternatives, Council's support of the procedures for the selection of a new University Pres. suggested by the Board of Governors in spite of many more creative and meaningful procedures suggested, and Council's continued support of a Board of Governors, administration, and Press—the policies of whom have resulted in poor planning at all levels and the promise of continuously poorer education for the same or greater fees.

REPRESENTATIVE?

The Council's claims to representativeness, the members of which are chosen by extreme minority participation, can be seen as nothing but a total discounting of those who do not participate. We suggest that it is this apathy, this uninvolved, this most obvious manifestation of the University as a repressive structure, which should be the major concern of any Council truly interested in the student, his abilities, and his potentials. But Council has attempted no action in this direction, has repeatedly (through motions introduced by Miss Pilkington) attempted to limit comments from the gallery through arguments which are not only historically inaccurate but verge upon the absurd, and has maintained that all points of view can be adequately represented through this non-representative body. Certain members of Council, it seems, would have us believe that Miss Young, Miss Pilkington and many other such reactionary spectacles are willing, no less able, to give radical and creative points of view on behalf of opinions in their constituencies, opinions which they have vociferously opposed. Even the most meager knowledge of principles of advocacy gives one cause to laugh here. Furthermore, many members of Council have shown the desire to cut off comments from the gallery on the rationale that they too often represent the views of minority opinion.

SMUGNESS

This lack of concern or ability to resolve "the fact of the matter" by Council, this elevation of efficiency and smug cliquishness above a discovery and promotion of the true interests of students (arresting and reversing the tide which pushes out students as nothing but commodity inputs for a branch plant economy, the exploitative and class values of which are simultaneously accepted wholesale), and the lack of faith and

trust in present or potential student ability on the part of Council has resulted in a Council which gives but token recognition to those to whom they are supposedly responsible. (meeting of Jan. 13—"Students are too whimsical and uninformed to be trusted with the really important questions regarding the University.") What publicity does Council give of its meetings, what capacity does the Council chamber offer for the seating of interested non-member students, where are Council's agendas published and when so that interested individuals may attend or speak to their "representatives", what reports does Council publish of its proceedings, does Council do anything else—of a well-publicized public nature—to inform, educate, and thereby interest students on a continuing basis? The C.U.S. referendum is a case in point, a referendum achieved only through

the persistence of members in the gallery. Since October of 1968 Council has known and had time to plan for the referendum. Indeed, the referendum was put off till this month precisely for the purpose of education and enlightened discussion on this most important question of a national student union. With what sort of well formulated student involvement plan did Student Council come forward, what type of publicity has Council given even its last minute debates on the issue?

After all this can we accept the argument given by many members of Council that apathy indicates approval, or that students are not capable of intelligent decision, or that only the individual students themselves can be blamed for their apathy? No, we cannot, for it is Council itself which has fostered and perpetuated this atmosphere of uninformed uninvolved.

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About The Carillon . . . Student paper condemned

REGINA (CUP)—A firm that claims to know such things says public confidence in the University of Saskatchewan is weakening.

Duff-Abbott Associates, a public relations firm commissioned by the university's board of governors, explains that confidence is diminished not so much because of what is being said about the university but because of what the university is not saying about itself.

The firm's report, given to U of S faculty last week as the student-administration squabble over The Carillon continued, says student newspapers are widely condemned as irresponsible journalism and that "responsible-minded students should clean up the student newspapers, preferably by persuasion but failing that by disciplinary action on the part of the university administration."

Duff-Abbott said its findings were based on more than 200 confidential interviews conducted in

Saskatchewan among persons influencing community opinion. Among those missed by the survey was Woodrow Lloyd, leader of the province's opposition NDP.

Elsewhere, Duff-Abbott's report says remarks made by premier Ross Thatcher attacking the university are largely regarded as purely political and therefore ignored.

There are other causes for concern, chief among them a strong feeling that there is a lack of administrative discipline at the university.

The report also says many people are irate about the administration's permissiveness toward the student papers and critical of faculty members who "openly expressed views on matters not within their jurisdiction."

"While few would dispute the faculty's right to public speech and often agree with their views, it is generally felt that the president and board chairman should speak for the university.

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	9 incr.	9	10	10	10	10