

# the courthouse: intimidating and alien



Bill Thorsell of the newly organized "Urban Design group" announced yesterday that the first "Champagne" award has been won by Richard Baird, a professor in the Political Science department, for saving two large elm trees from destruction by the College Plaza complex. The "Champagne" awards, which are to be presented each month, recognize good urban design.

The "Black Ribbon" award went to the new provincial courthouse in Churchill Square for "the insensitivity to the buildings, people, and spaces around it, for its destruction of public activity around the civic centre, and for the frightening and inaccurate symbol it offers for our Alberta standards of justice."

Bill Thorsell is the administrative officer for the U of A Senate.

This is the argument of the Urban Design group in support of their "Black Ribbon" award.

It has been argued that a courthouse should be imposing to impress on society the importance and dignity of justice. Hence the tradition of wigs in the British courts, red-capped robes in our own Supreme Courts, the pillars that the old courthouse presented to the street, and so on. While it may be desirable to portray symbolically our respect for law and justice. It is the contention of the Urban design group that what is being portrayed through the new courthouse is the powerlessness of the accused rather than the concept of innocent before proven guilty. The question must be asked "For whom does the judicial system operate?" For the judges? For the lawyers? For the accused? In general it operates for "society" but it is surely the accused who should stand at the centre of the actual judicial process. No evidence exists that the courthouse was designed on this assumption. On the contrary,

The powerlessness of the

accused is physically emphasized by the overbearing, dominating walls of the building as one approaches from the outside. While this rather frightening aspect affects everyone equally, the judges at least enjoy the ample offices on the top floor once inside and, even then, they enter via their own basement garage and private elevator.

To the mortal, on the other hand, the main entrance which is dominated by a gigantic provincial symbol, is just the first step in throwing himself into a cold and alienating environment.

The entrance is cold, unpleasing, and meaningless. It is a cruel joke that after clambering over the vast steps and forcing oneself into the immense contentless and austere "lobby" that one moves to the centre of this space only to find an elevator shaft. Compare this experience to entering the Legislative Building, where one also climbs long steps, but steps which are at least defined, and also enters the foyer which is high but terminating in a dome immediately before one is a fountain and flower garden leading up to a grand staircase. Office and halls lead off the foyer so that one has a sense of having entered the centre of important human activity and life. In entering the courthouse one feels that somehow life and color are dirty words. The higher floors of the building are no better in terms of the public spaces.

On at least one floor there are concrete flower pots, but unfortunately, no flowers. If there is something to be said for the hallways and foyers, it is that at least one is glad to be out of them, which makes it better to go into courtrooms. These in the opinion of the Urban Design Group are at least tasteful, warm, functional and designed to a human scale both in size and in appointments. The only reservation might be the cost of all that teak, and the complete lack of windows.

While the justices have neat well-appointed suites to which to retire, the clerks on the second floor work in a situation, to the visitor at least, seems to feature an intolerably high noise level. Countless typewriters and machines echo across vast open spaces. What kind of comment is this on Canadian justice?

Meanwhile, the accused who are being held in custody are lodged while awaiting trial in windowless cells in the basement. No technological device has been spared in the dehumanization of the prisoner who, except for those on appeals, still has not yet been convicted of a crime. Loudspeakers shout directions, electronically controlled doors move him from pen to pen until he is lodged again in another windowless cell with seatless toilets just outside one of the numerous courtrooms. What does one expect his reactions to be when finally admitted to a plush courtroom proper?

One doubts whether the respect which the court is supposed to instill is not more a case of fear and hostility, a rather poor basis on which to build a law-abiding society.

On whose model was our courthouse built? Not evidently on the experiences shared over many years in the old courthouse, but on the worst experiences of the American judicial system. Our courthouse, where the push of one button locks every door and stops every elevator, is a tribute to the worst expectations of social and criminal disorder. It is not in keeping with the gentle traditions of justice established in the Canadian West by the R.C.M.P. and largely maintained today as a symbol of justice, the courthouse has little to do with the Alberta we know. It must therefore have to do with what our judges and legal officials expect Alberta to become. Many people, including the Urban Design Group, reject the expectation.

## 4 1/4% unemployment "reasonable"

Bruce McKellips, assistant professor of economics, delivered a forum on unemployment to about 25 people yesterday in Tory.

McKellips related changes in the employment rate to changes in economic activity, and stated that too much attention is paid to the unemployment rate.

Labour markets tightness is determined by the potential capacity utilization versus actual level. McKellips stated that an unemployment rate of 4% indicated a "reasonable level of capacity utilization."

He warned of the misleading proxy of comparing present unemployment rates with those of past years. A 4% unemployment rate today indicates a healthier economy than it would have indicated in the 1950's.

It is the structure of the labour force that it is important in economic discussion. Different demographic groups show widely varying unemployment rates.

McKellips distinguished between age-sex groups, and cited the example that 5000 teenage girls out of work does not pose as great a problem to society as does 5000 unemployed prime-age men. The aggregate unemployment rate is often misleading, when different groups are not weighed accordingly.

Some groups are affected more by economic depression than others, and this gives rise to a shift in composition of the labour force in periods of time. Males have decreased in their percentage of the labour market, while females have steadily increased since 1950.

## "the hottest on the student market"

# termpaper sales outlawed?

The U of A like other major campuses across Canada may soon be faced with the problem of the commercial sale of term papers.

Dr. H. Kreisel, Academic Vice-President said that inquiries have been made to the Dept. of the Attorney General as to what steps may be taken to prevent these businesses from starting up here. Although no reply has yet been received, it is inevitable, that, in order to prove such businesses are illegitimate, the case would have to be processed through the courts.

"It's a corruption of the whole educational process and it must be stopped," Dr. Kreisel stated. The most flagrant example of the commercial sale of papers is found in the Los Angeles firm Termpapers Unlimited, which distributes a catalogue listing approximately 10,000 different topics for papers and sells them at \$2.50 a page. The price of original papers is a costly \$4.50 per page and for some specific fields such as Business, Science and Technical papers, the price climbs to \$5.50 per page. Thus a student wishing to purchase a 10 page paper would pay a minimum of \$25.00 for a catalogue paper and for an original paper of the same length as much as \$55.00. In comparison compensation for these excessive prices, Termpapers Unlimited states that "it is documented that 93% of our papers have contributed to a grade of 'B' or better," from which one could infer that as well as purchasing a paper, a student must do extra work on his own in order to achieve high grades.

Although the State of California has passed a statute making the sale of these papers illegal, the head office at UCLA is still sending

advertising to the Gateway and new branch offices of Termpapers Unlimited have been opened in Toronto and Montreal.

So far, the only example of this type of business at U of A campus has been that of the firm Gendron, Green and Weston, a company which offered to edit manuscripts of 10,000 or fewer words for a fee of \$10.00.

Bob Green, a former English teacher at Alberta Vocational College, said that under no condition would he agree to write a paper for a student and claimed that the main purpose of his business was to provide ghost-writing for new potential writer.

Green stated that he felt his company was legitimate in its goals and expressed strong opposition to

"parasitical" companies such as Termpapers Unlimited who were "exploiting a gap in the educational process".

He stated that if the University is going to operate as a "mass processing plant" then this gap inevitably will exist. He cited the example of one of his former Grade 9 students who was determined to become an electrical engineer but who wasn't, he said, able to write a sentence.

"If society is going to place these strenuous goals on all its members, irregardless of whether or not they have the capabilities, then we must be prepared for situations such as the commercial sale of termpapers to arise."

jc

