

# itates itself, its friends

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Something like children with a new enthusiasm, planners have rushed ahead with eyes riveted to their own goals. So doing they have trampled on the delicate, brushed aside thousands of people's best memories, demolished one of Edmonton's finest neighbourhoods, and literally walled the campus off from its surrounding community. They have created a physical environment to which most people cannot generously relate. The U of A is not a place to linger but to leave. The effect on the "community of scholars" must needs be unfortunate indeed.

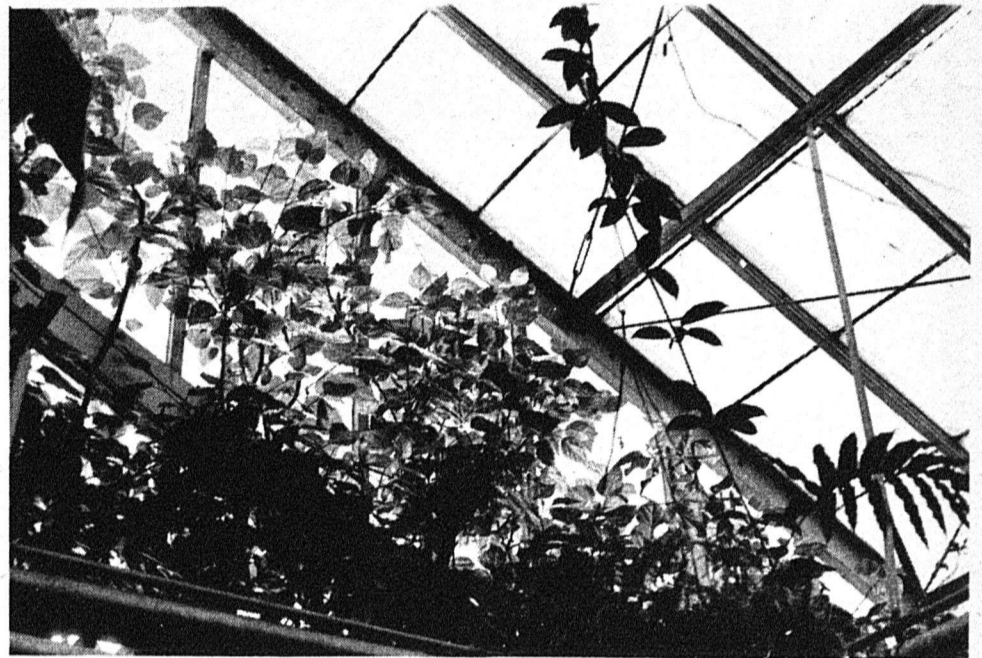
The plan denies us the seasons. Winter is our most compelling natural fact. The campus plan, rather than coping with winter seeks to reject it. We are building an inside campus when, for most of the year our climate calls us into the outdoors. And that includes much of winter. We do not find winter so unpleasant that we care nothing for subtly-drifted fields and trees clothed in snow and hoar-frost. Our shivering does not make us blind to the beauty of old buildings glowing with their orange light through the ice-fogged air. We want no part of any arrangement that trades our comfort for ugliness, our convenience for destruction. If an "urban" campus means isolation from nature in the way we live and build in our environment, we want no urban campus. The U of A has been built for a few weeks of really cold weather, not appreciating that one season increases the value of the next. We need a spring, summer and autumn campus too. The plan denies Garneau community. A community that had grown over many decades into one of Edmonton's most characterful, humane environments was forcefully expropriated and destroyed. Where the University once faced streets full of children, old people, students, professors, ancient and unique houses, cariguiana hedges, cats and dogs, it would now about a freeway, laundromats, garagestations and glaring mercury lights. The University thus becomes all the more

an institution, isolated from real life, isolated in one of the artificial and alienating pockets of our badly constructed urban environment.

By extension the plan denies the city and the province. With all the forces of increasing size and complexity already making access to the university by "ordinary" people more difficult, the plan assures it. HUB looms like the wall of China in the east- but in this case the exterior of the building is almost completely lacking in esthetic value. On the north the river is a natural barrier to entry, and much of this prime land is fenced off for convenient study by university scholars. On the west concrete carparks and fences discourage access, and on the south vast open spaces leave access in doubt. (That is, except for the new medical sciences building that hunches like some secret 1940 research establishment in the Soviet Urals.) Where other universities have wide gates and portals to focus their welcome and direct their visitors, the U of A presents a featureless face of concrete or nothingness. Again, all the concern is on the inside, with the university's own business.

What is the effect of these constructions on the faculty and students here? As suggested above, those with a developed taste for architecture and relations of form are demoralized. Identification of students and faculty cannot be with particular qualities of the physical environment because the environment is so unparticular- the repetition here of the corporate insensitivity of our city centres. There is no space to gain perspectives, and now at any rate, the perspectives are so unpleasant that the remaining space is nearly useless. The shared consciousness that derives from appreciation of one's surroundings is distorted into a shared feeling of rejection and apathy. The plan sustains no spirit of excellence, but rather one of confusion and futility.

As suggested above, the dominant



theme running through the plan is lack of respect. It is as though one large ego were bent on the realization of his own vision with regard to no other values. Where fifty years ago one man created a building of certain style, form and scale, the exterior relations needed to maintain its integrity are disallowed. In effect, that architect and the society in which he worked are denied their art. So the Arts Building faced its final threat with the new Commerce Building- now mercifully stilled by campus opinion. Similarly the men and women who built the Rutherford have been slapped down by that monstrous addition. The odd vernacular of the Cameron has been almost entirely shattered by that repugnant umbilical cord attached to its face: if ever a building need its own space, it was the Cameron. Each of these buildings once expressed its own individuality, albeit some to an excessive degree. Each of them has been manipulated and disfigured as though it had no rights of its own. And the former human inhabitants and friends of these buildings feel the same pangs of insult. In its disrespect of our past and our sentiments, the plan is not indigenous to Alberta. It is someone else's vision, someone who has not and does not experience life here. It is in that sense, alienation extant.

While the university has been constructed, particularly since 1968, with immensedisrespect, it has been done in the general absence of public criticism ,

particularly on campus. When the then President of the Students' Union was approached to stop the construction of Central Academic he replied that "it is already approved" and was not worth opposing. When the general plan was adopted, no audible reservations emerged from either students or faculty. When the whole question of the physical form of the University was given over to planners thousands of miles away, no noticeable questions were raised.

Now we have experience with the existing plan. It almost seems too late- they moved so quickly and on so many fronts. But there is more in the works. We should stop further implementation of the plan, review the processes followed up to this point, and begin to talk about the extremely difficult task of restoration. The plan has surely made it clear that "professionals" and "experts" are basically just other people with particular technical training. The training may be good or bad. The people may be sensitive or corporate. Since professionals will not criticize each other, it is left to us, the "laymen" to point out what is destructive and inhuman in their work.

The University campus should manifest, as far as it can, our best cultural values, something, as Spangler says, of our soul. Surely we cannot believe that it does so at present. We must assert ourselves at last.

## pedestrian path's a maze

In the days of the aristocracy in Europe, some of the landed gentry directed their gardeners to plan and maintain mazes using hedges. These could be complicated and interesting. Some can still be seen at the big estates.

We at the University of Alberta do a better job. Instead of lowly paid gardeners to design our mazes, we employ highly paid architects and planners. And, instead of using hedge plants, we build our mazes in concrete. It is possible that the length of life of some of the hedge mazes will be longer than those here. We cannot say.

In order to appreciate the success of the campus planners, consider one of the routes you follow. How much of the time does the prescribed route follow toward the goal? By how much has the traffic deviated from the prescribed route to shorten the distance?

As examples, consider two routes from SUB to Tory. Both cross the open area to the vicinity of CAB without much difficulty. So far the campus planners have left this area clear. Route 1 then goes down steps to pass under the end of CAB. The number of pedestrians using this route gives evidence that I am not the only one who considers it dangerous. A steep 18-ft. flight of stairs has hand rails on both sides and one in the middle. A trip on the top step could cause a tumble down the stairs. With northwest winds the strong gusts at the top of the stairs could easily be the cause of missing one's step. It is safer to climb the stairs, and more people go up than down. From the east side of CAB the route is straight to the end of Arts. This is a pedestrian area (as announced by the sign), and so one can move readily except for service vehicles, trucks, and taxicabs. East of Arts, one moves northward. The road way is again in a pedestrian area but the hazards now include workmen's cars, more trucks, and the Jiffy Catering Service. Correction. On Sunday mornings, watch out for Campus Police. This is the time they move into the area to see that it is not being used by taxis, trucks workmen's cars, and the Jiffy Catering Service. One may also move along the walk in front of Arts, climbing up and down "temporary" flights of stairs, to reach Tory.

The alternate route twists and turns through CAB and the entrance to Cameron. There are six doors, of which some are still locked at 7:40 A.M. From the exit to the Library, one turns almost completely around to pass under the overpass to CAB. Recently, an obstacle has been built here to make the route more circuitous. The next danger point is at the corner of Cameron. If the traffic is light, you are sure, at the blind corner, to bump into the sole pedestrian moving westward. If the traffic is heavy, you walk in the road with its potholes which are filled with water after every rain.

Past the corner of Cameron, you are once again in the "Pedestrian Area" where of course you are safe. The movement to Tory is still simple. But there are rumors that a new building is to be erected across this route. In other words, the campus planners are still struggling to complete the maze that is the University of Alberta Campus.

Richmond Longley

