



Student

By JER
From Canadi

Students are niggers. When you get that straight, our schools begin to make sense. It's more important, though, to understand why they're niggers. If we follow that question seriously, it will lead us past the zone of academic bullshit, where dedicated teachers pass their knowledge on to a new generation, and into the nitty-gritty of human needs and hangups. From there we can go on to consider whether it might ever be possible for students to come up from slavery.



First, look at the role students play in what we like to call education. At Cal State where I teach, the students have separate and unequal dining facilities. If I bring a student into the faculty dining room, my colleagues get uncomfortable, as though there were a bad smell. If I eat in the student cafeteria, I become known as the educational equivalent of a "nigger-lover". In at least one building there are even rest rooms which students may not use. Also there is an unwritten law barring student-faculty lovemaking. Fortunately, this anti-miscegenation law, like its Southern counterpart, is not 100 per cent effective.

CHOOSE HOMECOMING QUEEN

Students at Cal State are politically disenfranchised. They are in an academic Lowndes County. Most of them can vote in national elections -- their average age is about 26 -- but they have no voice in the decisions which affect their academic lives. The students are, it is true, allowed to have a toy government of their own. It is a government run, for the most part, by Uncle Toms, concerned principally with trivia. The faculty and administrators decide what courses will be offered; the students get to choose their own Homecoming Queen. Occasionally, when student leaders get uppity and rebellious, they're either ignored, put off with trivial concessions, or maneuvered expertly out of position.

A student at Cal State is expected to know his place. He calls a faculty member "Sir" or "Doctor" or "Professor" and he smiles and shuffles some as he stands outside the professor's office waiting for permission to enter. The faculty tell him what courses to take (in my department, English, even elective have to be approved by a faculty member): they tell him what to read, what to write, and, frequently, where to set the margins on his typewriter. They tell him what's true and what isn't. Some teachers insist that they encourage dissent but they're almost always lying and every student knows it. Tell The Man what he wants to hear or he'll fail you.

When a teacher says "jump" students

jump. I know of one professor who refused to take up class time for exams and required students to show up for tests at 6:30 in the morning. And they did, by God! Another, at exam time, provides answer cards to be filled out -- each one enclosed in a paper bag with a hole cut in the top to see through. Students stick their writing hands in the bags while taking the test. The teacher isn't a pro; I wish he were. He does it to prevent cheating. Another colleague once caught a student reading during one of his lectures and threw her book against the wall. Still another lectures his students into a stupor and then screams at them in rage when they fall asleep.

CLASS IS NOT DISMISSED!

During the first meeting of a class, one girl got up to leave after about ten minutes had gone by. The teacher rushed over, grabbed her by the arm, saying "This class is not dismissed!" and led her back to her seat. On the same day another teacher began by informing his class that he does not like beards, mustaches, long hair on boys or capri pants on girls, and will not tolerate any of that in his class. The class, incidentally, consisted mostly of high school teachers.

Even more discouraging than this Auschwitz approach to education is the fact that the students take it. They haven't gone through twelve years of public school for nothing. They've learned one thing and perhaps only one thing during those twelve years. They've forgotten their algebra. They're hopelessly vague about chemistry and physics. They've grown to fear and resent literature. They write like they've been lobotomized. But, Jesus can they follow orders! Freshmen come up to me with an essay and ask if I want it folded and whether their name should be in the upper right hand corner. And I want to cry and kiss them and caress their poor, tortured heads.

Students don't ask that orders make sense. They give up expecting things to make sense long before they leave elementary school. Things are true because the teacher says they're true. At a very early age we all learn to accept "two truths", as did certain medieval churchmen. Outside of class, things are true to your tongue, your finger, your stomach, your heart. Inside class, things are true by reason by authority. And that's just fine because you don't care anyway. Miss Wiedemeyer tells you a noun is a person, place or thing. So let it be. You don't give a rat's ass; she doesn't give a rat's ass.

SIRENS AND A RATTLE OF BULLETS

The important thing is to please her. Back in kindergarten, you found out that teachers only love children who stand in nice straight lines. And that's where it's been at ever since. Nothing changes except to get worse. School becomes more and more obviously a prison. Last year I spoke to a student assembly at Manuel Arts High School and then couldn't get out of the goddamn school. I mean there was no way out. Locked doors. High fences. One of the inmates was trying to make it over a fence when he saw me coming and froze in panic. For a moment, I expected sirens, a rattle of bullets, and him clawing the fence.

CUP EDITOR'S NOTE: When the *Student as Nigger* first appeared in print in the mid-60's, it created no small furor. Legions of student newspaper editors in universities, colleges and high schools in Canada and US were condemned, censured, demerited, detented and expelled for printing it.

Given the theme of the article - that students, faculty and education are stifled by the authoritarian classroom and institutional environment - the reactionary response of the "authorities" to the article was predictable. How does the article hold up after almost a decade? Surprisingly well. Conditions haven't changed that much; the classroom is still an authoritarian environment, as are our educational institutions themselves. And most students are still servile in their attitudes.

One change, however, is that it is unlikely that many student editors at the University and college level would be attacked for printing this article in 1976. The question is whether this is indicative of any fundamental change in the authoritarian system, or is it simply a change in tactics?

Many education "authorities" have learned that it's easier to allow criticism to take place and then fight any subsequent attempts to organize around that criticism, rather than place themselves at the outset in the awkward position of being censors.

High schools, of course, have not changed that much, and any student editor there reprinting Farber's article in 1976 is likely to be subject to the



Second year Civi
student and Repr
Large hopeful Mike
"I think I'm pretty
with a large number
campus." He sa
determine student v
large number of ac

He said there were
in the campaign, as
been dealt with.

He said not enou
done with respect
housing and that th
look for some form
weapon" to persuad
treat students fair
were "pretty much
they wish," he s
hopeful that recentl
would have some e
he said, "I don't exp
Bleakney said st
necessary although
giving \$1,000 to the
at the Centennial B
students were not i
measure, he said.
Bleakney, the major
should not receive
Abuses should be c
He said the demo
right in asking for
making bodies altho
think the monetary
"fair."

Speaking on the p
for the student unio
he Bleakney said,



Joseph Labelle, a
student, is in the r
SRC representati
half-term seat. La
concerned - with
direction and lea
SRC. He claimed
hinderance to the
"SRC is a debating
personnel" satisfi
individual". "It