

# STUDENT COMMUNICATION

by PAM KEIRSTEAD

In recent years there has been concern expressed in Western Europe and Great Britain over the significant increase in the number of student suicides. After examination, psychologists concluded that unsatisfactory guidance and counselling of students for future positions, coupled with the strenuous emphasis placed on academic achievement and the competition of examinations have been major casual factors.

In North America, the statistics are comparatively less alarming. This does not suggest that our educational system is universally immune from such unjust practices as the specification of the number of students per class division, nor, more generally, that university guidance is itself wholly satisfactory. But as a generalization it might be fairly said that the North American college student is under less pressure.

One phenomenon, nonetheless, appears to be common to many university students today in the "Western World." This is an inability to communicate sympathetically and satisfactorily with others, resultant pangs of isolationism and cynical depression. Many a French, English or Italian student is conspicuously a "drifter", an aimless consumer of knowledge. The North American student, then, is not alone in his affliction. (These comments of comparison, I must mention, are based on a superficial observation of what I concluded to be similar symptoms. It may well be that the Western European student isolationist differs dramatically from his North American counter-part by being concerned with a frustrating search for something. This, however, I doubt.) It is frequently said that the appearance of the "beat" is not peculiar to our generation. This argument is significantly concerned with the idea that throughout all civilization there has been youthful reaction and negative opposition to the norm. What is peculiar about the con-

temporary vagabond is his lack of reaction. This student's life of vegetative inertia is centred around a depressing philosophy of solipsism and is fundamentally purposeless. The world around is hostile, frustrating, and unexciting and consequently his own world lacks stimulation.

This inability, or rather refusal, to communicate (and the very possible resulting act of suicide itself) may be due in part to two general developments of mankind: the technological advances of the mass media of communication and the enormity of the scope of specialized knowledge before us, as students. Today the horror at several thousand people in Iran being sucked into the earth, the constant alarm of almost world demolition "by accident" are typical of daily news reports. It would seem that each day we crave a greater brutality, a greater natural disaster, a more devastating physical eruption than the imagination is fed by contemporary news reports. The daily miracle of "Mrs. Jones has just given birth to a ten-pound baby boy" is not newsworthy. Instead, interest lies with the events of power, exploitation and atrocity. And naturally enough.

The other mentioned factor which may well contribute to this student solipsism is the old chestnut of specialization. The North American tends to emphasize size and quantity. (This may be common to "affluent societies.") The seemingly endless number of separate fields of knowledge can obviously humble the student into submission to ignorance of all fields of knowledge other than his own specialized study. Without judging this, it is apparent that many students are frustrated by their lack of universal enlightenment! Today the degrees of specialization are especially vast.

In the stages of mental maturation we become aware of errors, evils and wrongs (as well as of truths and brilliance). This

awareness may lead to one of three possible dispositions: an active and productive attitude, a passive indifference or, of course, active indulgence in perversion. When these people are students, often potential leaders in their society, it is pathetic indeed. And when these students with recognized ability, hanging to the last vestige of "a road", fail in their studies, this is a tragedy—and because of the nature of the cause, of their vagrancy, this tragedy is essentially peculiar to our time.

Communication between individuals requires selfless participation, a developing awareness or sensitivity, and concentration. A world of physical diversion, developed to a stupendous dimension, is either our stumbling block or our stimulus to fulfillment and achievement. The "dispositional" choice is obvious; the subsequent tasks supremely challenging.

## WUSC Is Coming

TORONTO—That red wagon has started off on its Canadian tour again.

The World University Service Treasure Van left here last week to start another cross-country sale of goods on university campuses. The Van, now in its tenth year, will offer goods from 25 different countries.

The first sale of the year will be made at Carleton University. The Eastern and Quebec sales will commence at Sherbrooke University, and the Western tour begins, oddly enough, at the Ontario Agricultural College.

"We have had another major change of stock for this year," said Douglas Mayer, WUSC General Secretary, as he watched the Van being loaded. "There are almost 1,200 items catalogued, so we feel certain that we'll be able to satisfy almost all our customers with variety."

One of the novel sale items in this year's \$170,000 stock is a shrunken head from Ecuador. "So lifelike, you'd swear it was real" is WUSC's claim, but there are rumours to the contrary. These little items also come packed in their own coffins.

Poland, site of the 1962 WUSC Summer Seminar, is represented in this year's sale, as are India, Ghana, Kenya, Mexico, Israel and a host of other countries.

Treasure Van profits are used to further the student-welfare programmes of WUSC.

## Terry Toons

So, St. Thomas University is moving into our territory. Well, the Royal Commission and Mr. Deutch might be quite content with this plan, but from what I hear, there are quite a few people who aren't—specifically the town of Chatham and a fair number of people on this campus.

Although it would appear that the government is tied in financially I think the proposal has a lot of good points which should be considered before any rash statements are made.

First of all, the plan is a definite move toward true university status in that the method of affiliated colleges has been a characteristic of the greatest universities since the 12th century.

Secondly, it will be a good thing for the students of this university to be exposed to a little religious philosophy—something which has been scoffed at and scorned by too many students, too happy in their own little rut to even bother finding out what it is all about.

Finally, a larger plant would attract a far larger assortment of applications which would enable the university to breed a higher grade of scholar. This increased enrollment would certainly bring considerably more money into the university proper.

In any case it should make for interesting observations. Speaking of observations, rumor has it that some malcontents from Neville House, while swiping furniture from Harrison House (around 3 a.m. one morning last week) were observed by their beloved dean, who was reported to have been too sleepy to levy any fast fines.

October looks like a great month for fun and games—with Thanksgiving the first weekend, the Fall Formal the second, and the Mount A trip on the third—with a month like that, Thanksgiving should come at the end.

By the way, if this column rubs you the wrong way or if you have any specific complaints, drop us a line—care of the Brunswickan Office.

Just a last observation; the freshette pack appears to be riddled with quite a few fickle, ratio-conscious, soft-soaping she-wolves—but I guess it's inevitable!

## Maybe He Ducked

A father was telling his son what a good shot he was and he was probably exaggerating the truth somewhat. However, to prove his point, he took the boy out duck hunting with him one day. Ducks were scarce but finally a lone duck flew overhead and the father took careful aim and fired. The duck kept right on going. Turning to the boy he said, "Son, you've just witnessed a miracle. There flies a dead duck."

## The Visitor

The visitor from Oxford  
Speaking through his nose,  
Delivered us his lecture  
In thinly sculptured prose;  
While we, his captive audience,  
Attuned our red-brick minds  
To literary matters,  
Ignoring our behinds.

Eric Thompson

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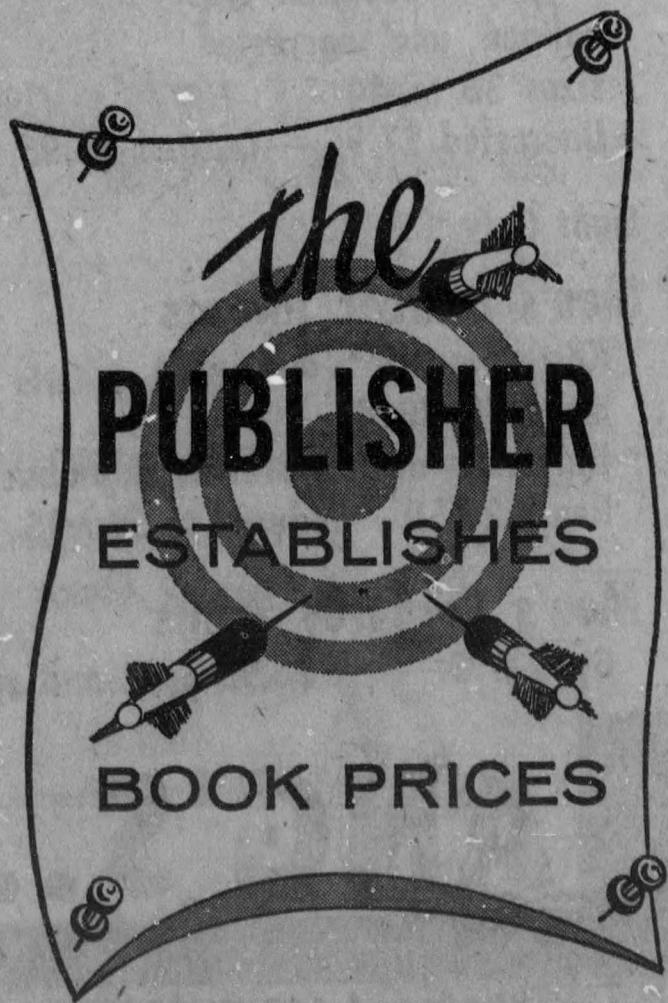
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