

The Gateway

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STAFF THIS ISSUE—Loyal staffers turning out to work on this, the fifteenth-to-last paper of the year, were Sheila Ballard, Gloria Skuba, Don Moren, Andy Rodger, Lorraine Minich, Ralph Melnychuk, Lorraine Allison, Marg Penn, Al Scarth, Maureen Love, Marion Conybeare, Isabelle Foord, Bill Beard, Peter Montgomery, Bev, Gietz, Richard Vivone, Dave Wright, Lawrence Hignell, The Spectre, and yours truly, Harvey Thomgirt.

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a homework suggestion

Last week this newspaper suggested in no uncertain terms that the university has failed to review adequately the sweeping amendments proposed to our University Act, a document which will receive consideration by the provincial Legislature next month.

These comments were made in an atmosphere which we find disturbing, to say the least. For example, Education Minister Randolph McKinnon last week flatly refused to make specific comments regarding the proposed revisions. Also, University President Dr. Walter H. Johns, himself a member of the governor's committee which is proposing the act revisions, has agreed with Provost A. A. Ryan that student affairs received inadequate attention and that improvements in this area will be necessary.

Furthermore, the suggestion has been raised that the Legislature will not have time to study the Act in detail, a fact which is disturbing in itself when one considers some of the subjects covered by the legislation: faculty representation on the Board of Governors, the proposed manner in which University Commission and Board members are to be selected and the position of the new University Commission as a buffer between government and the academic community.

Public ignorance and indifference to the proposed revisions has also been noteworthy. For example, when provincial Progressive Conservative party leader Peter Lougheed was questioned about the revisions Friday on this campus, he admitted to not having read the governors' report.

In view of all the critical issues involved in revising the University Act, we would like to make a suggestion, however ridiculous it might seem.

Sub-section (c) of Subsection 2 of

Section 35 of the current University Act states:—

"The Convocation may consider all questions affecting the

well-being of the University and make representations thereon to the Board and to the Senate."

Further to this, Section 38 reads:

"If at least fifteen members of Convocation, by writing under their hands setting out the object thereof, require the Chancellor to convene a special meeting of Convocation, the Chancellor shall call the special meeting without unnecessary delay."

The University Act defines Convocation members as all University of Alberta graduates, including persons holding honorary degrees from this institution.

Certainly the University Act revisions affect the "well-being of the University," and in view of the apparent disinterest shown by members of our academic community about the revisions, such a gathering might provide an excellent opportunity for complaints to be registered and acted upon. We are aware of the existence of a revisions committee, but a "special" Convocation would be at least a symbolic way of showing the Act revisions have been considered in an orderly, democratic way within the university community.

Such a meeting would help the province's legislators to determine whether the new act is a carefully-prepared popular piece of legislation. It could dispel some of the disturbing points which have been raised on our own campus during the last two weeks regarding the legislation.

And finally, if the new act is passed in much the same form as it now exists after the special Convocation, we will have seen the end of special Convocations for all time. For the governors' report recommends that special Convocations be discontinued except as "degree-conferring ceremonies" in future. Who, might we ask, will look after the "well-being of the University" when graduates are prevented from raising issues in "special" Convocations?



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a way of life

by doug walker

A friend of mine made a very interesting comment the other day about the care and feeding, so to speak, of a university career. (Thanks, J.B.)

A university, he said, is not merely an educational institution, it is a way of life. If you live the life, you pass; if you don't, you fail. I think I would amend this to say that if you live the life, you will, with few exceptions, do well. You will reap all the benefits as well as contributing to the expansion and the improvement of the school—if you go about it the right way.

And I would like to think the right way, at the undergraduate level at least, is simply to regard the university career as a responsible job. Very few people of my acquaintance could not improve their performances considerably just by putting in their forty hours a week at their classroom-office. At least some of the material is bound to sink in sooner or later.

The parallel can be continued even further. There are some very busy periods in our educational company—er, institution. Inventory taking time, for instance. And what about those campaigns to get the new products—sorry, I meant ideas—on to the market. Comparable personalities keep showing up all the time also. There is the remote Board of Directors which say that a mere worker isn't really qualified to assist in running a corporation as complex as this one. There are the salesmen, the accountants, and below all, the sometimes eager, often skeptical customers: the students. Perhaps the most appropriate slogan

here is "The customer is always wrong."

If this account appears somewhat mechanical and cynical, I suppose the only excuse I can offer is that it is the end result of the educational system that produced it.

The unfortunate situation has occurred that the universities across the continent have not been able to keep pace with the problems caused by the student population explosion. The most obvious example of this is the lack of space and staff that forces one thousand students into the jungle of Psychology 202. Who is to blame for this? I don't think there really is a blame as such, but the academics suffer just the same.

Hand in hand with this surplus of students go the methods developed to deal with it. The production lines, the impersonal computer programming manage to produce in too many students a feeling of isolation from the knowledge they are seeking.

Along with this depersonalization goes an equally serious problem. At the undergraduate level, the lonely student is pressured to specialize, to prepare for a career or for graduate school. We even have the pre-med, pre-dent, pre-law programs that enable us to specialize before our specialty. But once he is in graduate school, the student is told that since he is now a specialist, he must concentrate in this one field. Somewhere along the line, he missed perhaps the most valuable contribution of all, a well-balanced, general education.

Where all this leads us, I won't attempt to answer. Perhaps the ultimate cynic would look forward to the day when cybernetics will be able to replace us all, students and staff alike.

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The Gateway welcomes letters on topics of student interest. Correspondents are asked to be brief, otherwise their letter will be subject to abridgement. And correspondents, in replying to one another, should keep to the issues under discussion and abstain from personal attacks. All letters to the editor must bear the name of the writer. No pseudonyms will be published.