FOR I'VE BEEN DEAD SINCE MY CONCEPTION

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THE UNIVERSITY IS DEAD

It will never be a prime mover in the search for truth. It will never lead the way in the search for social justice. It will continue to orientate people for their pre-determined role in society. It will continue to further the cause of a multi-tiered society. It will only 'discuss', 'teach' and promote — with minor concessions — what the status quo would like discussed, taught and promoted. The university is not, has never been, and never will be, a leader of anything.

WHY?

Academics who should be concerned with the search for truth are too concerned with the effort to publish, to achieve tenure and to avoid thinking. There are exceptions, of course, but by and large there is little or no concern for truth, new thoughts, new solutions or people. Many academics will tell you the reason for all of this is the growing size of the university. "How can one be expected to teach, let alone participate in a dialogue with, the number of students who infiltrate the university today?" The answer is not that simple. That type of thinking only begs the question. Universities for centuries have been maintainers of the status quo, no matter what their size. They have traditionally been for the elite, or the soon-to-be-elite. They have always 'thaught' what has gone on before — not what could be, or even what should be. How can the university be a mover if it doesn't move until something has happened — and been accepted?

WHAT INTELLECTUALS DO . . .

Looking outside the university some people pointed to the late John F. Kennedy, and his band of 'intellectual' supporters, as the vanguard for a new era. What should be apparent to people is the only thing his election did was make obvious, to more people, the death of the university and academics as saviors of the world. It was President Kennedy and his advisors who escalated the Vietnamese war. It was President Kennedy and his advisors who launched an aggressive, and abortive, mission against Cuba. It was Kennedy and associates who presented watered-down social justice legislation for the blacks. It was Kennedy and his para-military intellectuals, many of them top-ranking university academics, who failed.

. . . AND THE REACTION

And while they failed the university continued to sit around and do nothing. It wasn't until Vietnam became such an obvious blunder, protested by elements outside the academic community, that university profs found their voices. Even then it was only because the war couldn't be won. Criticism of the US policy that people have the right to be free even if it kills them, except for blacks who are killed if they try, was extremely light, almost to the point of non-existence (until it became popular).

COUNTERVAILING FORCES

Of course it's simply a matter of countervailing forces. The profs teach the kids and the government has the money. If the students are 'taught' properly then research and salary money becomes available — if not, the job disappears. It's a shame — but how many people do you hear complaining. After all it's a manifestation of class-room techniques. Do what you're told. Respect authority. Memorize and regurgitate what your teachers (betters, elders, superiors) tell you — the French are cowards, blacks are stupid, the Irish are drunkards, the Asians are cruel, Communists are dangerous, and of course they're all lazy and beneath the dignity of any self-respecting white Anglo-Saxon, Protestant or Catholic.

IT AIN'T NECESSARILY SO

It is continually said that movements toward freedom, equality and peace must come from the university, from the educated. This is not, and never has been, the case. Individuals throughout history who have endeavored to help either a specific group, or mankind as a whole, have been educated outside the university. Christ, Gandhi, Malcolm X — they didn't need university degrees. That is not to say some of the leaders didn't have a degree, or similar background. But certainly Gandhi didn't learn about racial prejudice in Africa and India while he was at school in England. He wasn't told what British imperialism was doing to India. He saw it for what it was outside the university. It was a matter of opening his eyes to the everyday experiences around him, and then searching for a solution.

PASSIVE VS. ACTIVE

Passive resistance became his weapon in South Africa and in India. It became the weapon of the blacks in the US for the first part of their campaign to freedom and equality. Passive resistance fits in reasonably well with the academic. After all, he's been passive for a long time. He is bound by his own tradition to support it. But let the talk turn burning to rat—and bug-infested ghettoes, let it turn to following the 'Christian" tradition of picking up arms to fight for freedom, let it turn to action and he's immediately against it. "They've gone too far. They'll lost a lot of support." So what? The support was dubious at best.

WHAT TO DO

Education, awareness, and action will start not with the university, not even within the university. People in the university who are acting were aware before they entered the hallowed halls of academe. So it must be for all people. We must learn to assess developments around us in the society as a whole. We must become concerned not with self-respect but with mutual respect. We must not sit back and wait for someone else to take a stand. We must pressure other people into taking stands by our own actions. We must stop giving lip-service to the high-sounding goals of democracy and start practicing them. Perhaps then we can turn to the university, or some other source, and create a vehicle which is totally involved with, and dedicated to advancing, not retarding, the entire society. We must integrate with society, not continue to stay outside it.

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U.P.E.I. - A CHALLENGE

Cadre: Could you explain why the freshmen are largely on the downtown campus?

Baker: Well, we had to make some kind of division, since we had two campuses, and there are really only about two or three possibilities. One was, we could really simply have gone on with the old PWC people downtown, and the old SDU people at Malpeque — running really two separate institutions over again. I was opposed to that because I think we should get together, and we might as well get together now.

Another possibility would have been to split by subjects — put all the scientists on one campus and all the arts people on the other. Well, we thought that was bad educationally. We want to work with our own colleagues in the same years and so on, together.

There seemed some advantage in doing what we have done: we've put the freshmen mainly on the downtown campus; this will keep them together; it involves less running backwards and forwards, and also it means that we put the sophomores, juniors, and seniors together, so that they can start thinking of themselves as UPEI and not as one of the former institutions.

Now we debated this at great length, the students and the faculty, and we all realized that ideally we should all be together, but we decided that this was the best of the choices we had available.

Cadre: You couldn't just mingle the arts and science on each campus because of the transportation problem?

Baker: It's not just the transportation — it's the whole question of the labs, and if we'd simply carried on two full programs, we would not have been joining the two universities together at all, it would have been simply a continuation of the old division. The facilities really didn't permit it either. It's easier to run the labs in one place — it's not mainly transportation, but transportation has something to do with it.

Cadre: What remains to be done in setting up shop?

Baker: Not a great deal in terms of setting up shop, to open. The senate has to decide on the basic program of the university — the admission requirements, the way in which we'll appoint chairmen and deans — there's got to be agreement on things like fringe benefits — before long we're going to have to start considering our budget for 1970-71. We've got to work out plant for developing a campus, we've got to work out plans for developing the library — just about everything that has to be done in a new university.

But as far as actually setting up shop, you know, starting teaching, I think we're pretty well done.

Cadre: What would you like to see the university develop into?

Baker: Oh I think it's almost inevitable that it'll be a liberal arts college, and I'd naturally like it to be a good one. I think it's got every chance of being one. We won't be of the size that will enable us to go into every subject under the sun, and I doubt that we'd be able to go into graduate work for quite a long time, but two thousand is about the right size for a good liberal arts college, with some science, some engineering, (pre-engineering), and some things like education, business administration.

Cadre: How do you feel about the upcoming year?

Baker: Oh I think fairly confident considering the amount we have to do. We've got a great deal done, and I think people are working well together. We'll have a lot of confusions and difficulties; we'll have so many things to do that I don't suppose all of them will get done, and since some people will consider some important that we don't get done, inevitably they'll probably be unhappy. But I think we've got going well.

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Yes ☐ No ☐