

Current Affairs Bulletin

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The University Student '67

University Students are constantly writing about themselves and student life — sometimes to the point, often wide of it; sometimes brilliantly, more usually on shaky assumptions with predictable dullness. It is addressed to other students and appears in student publications. Academic studies of aspects of undergraduate life and student performance appear regularly in specialist journals. These are scholarly and quite often relate to some aspect of university or general educational policy. Very rarely does a wide public have the chance to read what a university student has to say about what it means to be one. This issue of CAB provides that opportunity as the academic year in Australian universities opens. Many readers both inside and outside universities will find the author's comments puzzling, objectionable, irreverent, questionable and even simply wrong. Others will agree with them. In any event there is no doubt about his authenticity. Already a graduate in one faculty, he is now an undergraduate in another. He is a well-known figure in student life, and outside it, as student politician, conference delegate, publicist and controversialist. He is familiar with the university student scene in Australian universities other than his own, which is in New South Wales.

THIS year almost 100,000 students will enrol at the 13 Australian universities and three university colleges, where they will be trained and a few educated. When these 100,000 come to sit for their annual examinations, about 30 per cent will fail outright and be faced with either ejection from the seat of learning or repeating this year's curriculum in 1968; 10,000 will not only pass, but graduate out into the off-campus world of commerce and the professions, where they will become lawyers, doctors, veterinarians, pharmacists, architects, scientists, teachers, diplomatic pouch marsupials and, the very best of them, misfits.

Misfits think, question, protest—sometimes a little, sometimes a lot—but generally try to inject a little intellectual energy into what they are doing and ferment the pretty doughy mass about them. It is—or

should be—the main function of a university to produce such people — apart from providing them with basic academic training.

One would like to think that basic academic training itself—whatever its content—would automatically produce thinking, questioning, protesting misfits. It ought to. But it does not. For the great majority of students, academic training comes down to the grind of taking—and passing—courses. Eyes are fixed on Finals and deflect rarely to glance, for even a little while, on a wider intellectual world. As competitiveness increases, intensified by tighter student quotas and stiffer internal standards, the position worsens and the quality of student life grows more barren. And only a very few students are ever allowed to forget—either by parents or the scholarship systems —

that they are there to pass in the minimum possible time.

The whole range of activities outside course taking — student/staff political groups, faculty and subject societies, student writing and publishing, protest meeting — become more and more ignored. The more students participate in these activities—and staff too for that matter — the richer the student life. As it is — particularly in the bigger universities—the sense of a university *community* weakens to a point where students—and staff—have little in common but their course taking—and giving.

The Vice Chancellor of Melbourne University, Sir George Paton, is on record as saying that undergraduate involvement in these extra-curricular activities is now less than when he was a student. The writer does not doubt the truth of this—and that of its corollary: there is now much less concern with intellectual and political issues within the student community and far less concern with the issues of life outside it. That means less education.

Types of University

Very few students actively choose their *alma mater*; except in those cities that provide more than one, geography generally eliminates any choice altogether or narrows it down to two possibilities, one of which is eliminated either by academic performance or parental pretensions. Yet there is not only theoretically a fair number of universities from which to choose, but also a surprisingly large range of *types*.

Foremost are the two oldest universities, Sydney (1850) and Melbourne (1853), now indulging a new-found sense of tradition as their best loved sons become Prime Ministers, Nobel Laureates, Knights of the Realm and Grand Old Men of the Establishment. To those two institutions many feel called, but each year fewer, proportionally, are chosen.* In the early 'sixties, a stringent quota system of entry came into effect at these two universities; such quotas now exist in more than half the universities, but these were the first and they have become the first to reap the harvest just outlined.

With the over-crowding in the old universities came the "second universities". There was a gap of almost 40 years between the founding of the last state university (W.A., 1911) and the founding of the first of the "seconds"—The University of New South Wales (so named in 1958). This had made an earlier and shaky start in 1949 as the N.S.W. University of Technology. The second universities have had not only their youth to contend with but the condescension of their elders, who viewed them as catchment areas for the intellectual drain-off; hence, the patronising references to "The Farm" (Monash University) and "Kenso High" or "The Tech." (University of N.S.W.).

These are young campuses which, in their struggle for identity, have developed a lively brand of student journalism and cultivated flamboyant personalities, who have been called like Moses to lead them out of the wilderness of B-class intellectualism. The University of N.S.W. has had to fight against both its original concept as a University of Technology and an ambitious expansionist policy.

If U.N.S.W. is "The Tech.", Monash is the Discotech. This is the "go-go" campus which has spawned Australia's most successful pop weekly (*Go Set*), and is also the swinging centre of the Melbourne Demonstration biz. La Trobe (1964), Macquarie (1964) and Flinders (1964) are too young to characterise.

Between the old and the new are the Universities of Adelaide (1874), Tasmania (1890), Queensland (1909) and Western Australia. The atmosphere is traditional, the pace is easier and the *esprit de corps* strong, partly as a defensive reaction, but also because they are very close to the ideal size for a well-unified student body.

It is the new universities in a provincial setting that provide the greatest challenge. It is hard to establish any university spirit in such places. Fortunately for Newcastle University College, Newcastle dislikes Sydney and there was an active local university

* The situation in N.S.W. this year where there are vacant places in some faculties is the result of the hiatus year in the Secondary Schools: the last full Leaving Certificate classes sat in 1965; the first full Higher Schools Certificate classes sit in late 1967.

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movement. And however mixed Newcastle's feelings might have been about things of the mind it was not prepared to let Sydney control them in Newcastle. So the university there was able to establish some sense of unity out of their People's Revolution—the struggle to obtain autonomy from their ambivalent step-father, the University of N.S.W.

The University of New England (1954), which broke from the less possessive Sydney University 11 years earlier, had no such birth trauma but still a lot to contend with: "town-gown" friction with nearby Armidale, the inherent apathy of college life and the general conservatism of its high-percentage "farmer's sons" population. If it were not for a few lively Sydney imports, the campus would have done a Van Winkle.

The university colleges of Broken Hill, Townsville and Wollongong do not feel as though they are universities at all, mainly because they are not.

The Australian National University, founded in the late 'forties as primarily a research institute, established its undergraduate School of General Studies in 1960 by the rather shot-gun absorption of the older Canberra University College which had been affiliated with Melbourne University. It is the pampered darling of the Commonwealth Government, which endows it so generously that it is able to offer lucrative scholarships to lure interstate talents to its embrace. It has often been accused of poaching.

Yet the effiteness of undergraduate life at A.N.U. is the most telling commentary on the barrenness of Australian undergraduate life generally. Set in the National Capital,

the fount of High Policy and the source of Big Decision, surrounded by high-level academics who have the ear of Someone Up There, it might well have been expected to prove the most dynamic and involved campus in the country. As things stand, it is distinguished by its apathy, conservatism and indifference to national causes. Perhaps this is because so many of the students are sons and daughters of public servants who might be embarrassed by offspring anarchy, or perhaps they are intimidated by the general sense of order of Canberra itself, springing as it did from the minds of the Town Planners. Much more likely, in the writer's view, is the main cause to be found in the extent to which students are in college residence (46 per cent). This fragments any possible campus unity and community into small units which become absorbed in their internal affairs and parochial competition—a feature also of New England where 87 per cent of full-time students are in college.

The writer's point about colleges in Australian universities is that not only do they break down the undergraduate community, but that they also prolong in many cases the atmosphere and attitudes of school life—particularly boarding school life—which are, for the purposes of university work, best left behind as soon as possible. They give none of the advantages of the originals on which they were supposed to be modelled—the colleges of Oxford and Cambridge, where academics and undergraduates share a community life, presumably to its intellectual enrichment. They are less than the originals and unrewardingly more than mere halls of residence.

TABLE 1

State	Number aged 17 (1961) (A.)	Number completing secondary education (1961) (B.)	% of those completing secondary education to total state pop. of 17-year-olds (B/A)	Ratio of total university enrolment to state pop. (1966)
Q'land	24,600	2,700	11.1	0.92
S. Aust.	15,200	2,700	17.8	0.87
N.S.W.	62,500	11,500	18.4	0.84
W.A.	12,100	1,600	13.4	0.66
Tasmania	5,700	300	4.9	0.64
Victoria	44,200	4,300	9.7	0.61
A.C.T.	—	—	—	3.31

Students and the Community

Each community responds with unequal fervour to the demands of education. This can be judged roughly by the proportion of young people completing their secondary education and going up to university in each state. Table 1 gives some indication with figures in the first three columns taken from the Martin Report*; those in column four from the Australian Universities Commission report.†

For a society as uniform in other respects the figures are puzzling and the variations difficult to explain. They are worth, however, a few speculative comments.

The high ratio of university enrolments in Queensland in view of the very mediocre performance indicated in column three seems to reflect a wider social attitude: "If you are going to finish secondary school anyway, you might as well go to the university." While it is true that proportionally fewer students complete their schooling than in some other states, more of them go up to university. Even apples and potatoes do not account for Tasmania's showing. The N.S.W. figures are possibly explained by the fact that there are more universities in that state, that they are dispersed, so that the thought of getting a son or daughter to a university is entertained more widely in the community generally. The high ranking of South Australia does not surprise: there is a long tradition of patrician interest and support for university education and the arts and state scholarship systems are wide and generous. Adelaide mounts Australia's only really successful large Festival of Arts.

Adelaide University reflects this environment. For its size—and many would contend that this (9000) is the optimal size for any university—its contribution to Australian student life is probably bettered by none. It participates with characteristic vigour in most activities, particularly the overseas travel schemes, work camps and collections for Abschol and World University Service, the university charities.

The poor showing of Victoria is no less unsurprising. Noting this, the Martin Committee commented: "*In large part this can be explained by the existence in Victoria of a system of technical education*

which is much more developed than in any other state." This is small consolation to those who believe a university has considerably more to offer by way of a broader education than any of Sir Henry Bolte's beloved technical institutes and must reflect ultimately on his entrenched Government, which has been in power during most of the university expansion period.

The very high Canberra ratio reflects the importation of interstate students to some degree, but might also argue a keen sense of career opportunism in A.C.T.

Another index to the community's attitude to its universities is that provided by the survey of Philp, *et al.*, carried out at the University of Sydney.‡ Those interviewed were given the situation where their child at age 17 had to choose between taking up a good job or going to the university on a scholarship with fees and living allowance paid. If it were their son, 77 per cent would advise him to take up the scholarship; if their daughter the number dropped to 50 per cent. These figures appear encouraging, but obviously there are still many people to be convinced that "it's all right" if their son goes to university. Daughters' intellects, it seems, are much more expendable.

Private Lives—the Family

The public senses that university students are "different" somehow, and so they are. Yet the more they differ, the more they stay the same: out of the loins of conservatism are they born and to its waiting grasp they must soon sink back.

The shock of the initial exposure to university "differentness" is only surpassed by the shock, at graduation, of exposure to the cold world of reality, lounge suits and regular working hours. The effects of the latter trauma linger on, long after the memory of university life is only something to exaggerate about, over sherry.

In every Australian university, except New England, A.N.U. and Townsville College, an overwhelming majority of full-time students live at home in a state of protracted adolescence. If they have siblings of

* *Tertiary Education in Australia*: a report submitted by a committee under the Chairmanship of Sir Leslie Martin to the Commonwealth Government (1964), p. 35.

† Third Report of A.U.C. (Aug. 1966).

‡ See Further Reading.

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4), p. 35.

about the same age, they quickly learn how "different" a university student's position is in family life. The student, as often as not, is dependent on his family for free lodgings (unlike his working brother, who pays his own way) and some kind of regular allowance, doled out more or less reluctantly. In return, he is housed, pampered and treated like a social invalid. If the family aspirations are in any way fixated on him, this treatment is intensified. He carries the burden of their hopes and is the threat to their pride.



The family car is there for the asking—but it has to be asked for. Medical and other bills have to be handed over to parental ministrations at the right psychological moment. Mother may insist that since the family pays for the clothing, she should have a say in the choice. For this social environment, society pays dearly: university students are extraordinarily dependent and immature. Either they are unaware of this or do not mind it, which is worse. For in a recent survey at Sydney University, it was shown that of the 70 per cent of students who live at home, about 95 per cent are either completely or reasonably satisfied with the conditions under which they live. Of the dissatisfied, the main complaints

* A survey carried out in Oxford University in the early 'fifties showed that of medical conditions affecting undergraduates, 52.5 per cent were mental conditions. (Parnell: See Further Reading.)

were of externals, such as travel or noise, rather than the more subtle features of the *milieu interieur*.

The great majority of university students are immature because their studies are used to defer not only national service, but virtually all their social responsibilities and obligations.

There are so many adult situations, particularly financial, that they do not have to face. Admittedly, a number of them are job-holders as well as students, but they are comparatively few — possibly fewer now than 15 years ago when there were no student quotas and many fewer scholarships.

There are of course the "Evening Students" who hold a bank or public service job full-time during the day and arrive business-suited at the university campus only after dark and disappear from it a few hours later. In this context they cannot be regarded as students at all. Students, then, lack the kind of social contact that others encounter in their daily lives and employment; particularly they lack the emotional and social flexibility needed to rub along with a group of employers and fellow-employees with whom they have very little in common. University students can afford to be more anti-social than others because they move in an artificial environment where achievement depends solely on formal results.

Heredity and Environment

As intellectuals and I.Q.-pluses, they are different because they have some of the common characteristics of *homo sapientior*: intelligence in many people is an effective barrier to spontaneous emotional response and, worse still, many students come from intelligent parents who have suffered the same disability and passed it on, with interest, to their offspring. In higher years they mix with academics who are often no less emotionally timid or desiccated, and cannot give the warm and open encouragement that students so often crave. Such personalities are lonely; their environment puts them in fear of rejection and falling short of their goals. Little wonder that the universities provide more than their share of neurotics and psychotic drop-outs.*

Students are often intelligent enough to see the errors in the thinking of others, particularly their parents, but lack the emotional maturity necessary either for tolerance or patient argumentation.

Instead, they may become arrogant and intellectual exhibitionists, name-dropping and arguing from a carefully contrived position of "authority". On graduation they emerge with the deeply entrenched delusion that the world owes them a living.

The social imbalance of university intake does not help matters: the Martin Report revealed that the sons of unskilled and semi-skilled workers, comprising one-third of the population, contribute a mere 8 per cent of the university population. Yet exactly 8 per cent of the community population (the academics and higher administrative bracket) provide one-third of the university population. This lopsided intake, worse in the older universities, is not produced necessarily, or even primarily, by economic considerations so much as by intellectual, social and attitudinal differences.

Whatever the cause, this imbalance perpetuates the idea of the university as a finishing school for the well-off in our egalitarian society, and this encourages amongst the general public an anti-intellectualism remarkable for its intensity. If students be treated as an élite, they soon learn to behave like spoilt brats who expect concessions wherever they go and free university services turned on as their privilege.

The Instabilities

In some ways the Martin Report figures are deceptive in so far as they suggest a much greater home acceptance of university *mores* than really exists. In many (one is tempted to say, most) Australian homes, the mother plays a dominant role, particularly in child-raising, and rarely does she have the educational background to understand university concepts properly. In a 1963 survey at the University of Melbourne, no more than 5 per cent of mothers of new students had a university degree. In most Australian universities, this figure would probably be much the same.

While a good part of the friction between a student and his family is no different in



"Hail . . ."

kind from the traditional problems of late adolescence, particularly that of sex, it is aggravated by his much greater domestic dependence and his freer access to uncomfortably novel facts and attitudes which raise intellectual questions. The current revolution in social and moral values involves students deeply but, despite popular belief, university rates of promiscuity/chastity are probably no worse (or better, depending on your view) than a comparable non-university sample. There *is* much greater discussion of sex and more intellectual seduction: actual defloration is more of a premeditated crime.

The process worker who finds himself successful in back-seat sexuality with the cafeteria waitress one night after an extra tiddly bit of drinking has his counterpart in the earnest young arts student who, after much fruitful ratiocination with his bird, proclaims their relationship "meaningful" and its consummation justifiable. The ex-student, male or female, who finally marches piously down the aisle, may well have experienced more such transient relationships than "outsiders", but the tally is more an index of emotional instability than of deliberate promiscuity.

Instability, in fact, is one of the prime determinants of a student's immaturity. His old school friends soon find themselves in a steady job with a steady climb up the promotion ladder ahead. Even if the first job does not quite work out, there are many others offering, and it is merely time before the "right job" is found. Even a complete change of heart merely involves looking up the appropriate classification in the "Positions Vacant", applying, and commencing



... and Farewell."

the training required. When the "right girl" comes along, out the lovely pair go to a new suburb to put their deposit down on a block, purchase the diamond ring and accumulate the wherewithal of a bottom drawer and a satisfactory bank balance.

Steadiness, without academic results, will get a student nowhere and anyhow probably indicates he is struggling from the start. However humble or exalted are his ambitions, nothing is certain until graduation day. There is no certainty where his post-graduate training or job opportunities will take him. If he is a trainee teacher, medical or bonded student he may be posted anywhere the Powers that Be see fit. Transfer to another faculty, especially under scholarship provisions, involves a major upheaval. A fully trained university graduate has often by the age of 21 lost all vocational mobility.

In this context of instability, insecurity and overdependence, with limited interpersonal contact and severe deprivation of normal social experience, the student becomes a dissident. But it is *emotional* rather than intellectual and political dissidence. It is a protest against his dependence needs, fanned by intolerance and arrogance, superficially decked out in some form of rationalisation.

A march down town may be rationalised out as an anti-Vietnam demonstration, but this is really just an excuse to beat the cops and have yourself a ball. "Commem" usually has some charity as its excuse and adolescent exhibitionism, nudging hooliganism, as its manifestation. Protesting is a fairly clandestine sport and the main skill

is "keeping it from the oldies", who are usually unaware of the *revolutionaire* they are nurturing. At 19, it is the equivalent to smoking behind the toolshed at 12.

There is, of course, the reverse of this in a few cases. "Oldies", sometime *revolutionaires* themselves but now, never having got that academic appointment, eking it out in the advertising world, actively encourage student son or daughter to protest, to march, to beat the cops. In the event of an arrest and release on \$10 bail, it becomes a nostalgic talking point in parental living-rooms, with the student encouraged to re-tell it all to the admiring company. At 19, it is the equivalent of being asked to recite to the guests as an eight-year-old.

Both are a pity, because they mean that most university activity lacks any kind of genuine commitment. These kinds of behaviour are too often a passing phase, shrugged off with the duffle coat and skivvy when conformity beckons. Of course, there are students who cannot, or do not want to, keep their non-conformity from the "oldies" and suffer ultimate expulsion from the parental home. These, particularly in first and second year, contribute heavily to the failure rates.

Others leave home because they feel the need to set themselves up on their own or consider it offers a better life. If Sydney University figures are any indication, third year students who are away from home are at a study advantage and most educationists and student health advisers agree that these students are the group making the best community adjustment. (See Table 2, p. 122.)

These figures are interesting any way you read them and really call for much more comment than can be given here. But college students always seem to do well, as perhaps they should, since college entry is selective, and in first year, as the table shows, they are at a marked advantage: the regimented life solves much of the uncertainty confronting other freshers, and there is also tutorial guidance available within the college.

However, for the valuable space they occupy and the money they cost, the colleges contribute little to corporate university life. The point is worth repeating that inter-collegiate rivalry breeds fragmentation

TABLE 2
Pass/Fail Ratios, Sydney University
Students in first years of Science, Law and Engineering Differentiated According to
Residence
1963

	Total in year Pass/Fail	College Pass/Fail	Lodgings Pass/Fail	Home Pass/Fail
Science I	1.9	2.0	1.4	1.8
II	1.4	1.5	0.9	1.6
III	5.3	4.3	6.9	5.1
Law I	1.5	3.6	1.7	1.4
II	2.3	2.0	1.9	2.4
III	4.6	2.5	7.0	4.8
Engineering I	1.3	6.5	1.0	1.2
II	2.5	2.8	1.9	2.9
III	3.7	4.2	3.0	4.1

and college activities sap manpower from the main university activities. College meal times, particularly in the middle of the day, draw students away from important meetings. As at home, those who participate most in university life face grave problems away from university. Non-conformity does not go over well with college officialdom or its members, and the student who becomes engrossed in the mainstream of university life is likely to be criticised for insufficient college participation or "college spirit".

For most students, colleges seem academic backwaters in which social snobbery, to a degree uncharacteristic of the rest of the university, collects. They do not seem especially productive and, by third year, as Table 2 indicates, provide even little educational advantage to their student members.

Why Do Students Fail?

Considerable research has shown, consistently and predictably, that students fail in the first instance because they do not have the native wit or aptitude for the course undertaken. It has also been indicated that matriculation results correlate only about .4-.6 with university success* and the standard intelligence test scores are not much better. The engineering faculty is where intelligence scores give the most reliable prediction; the law faculty allegedly boasts the lowest average intelligence quotient.

But there are subtler hurdles to academic success than being devoid of the cerebral wherewithal. Schonell *et al.* in their study† concluded:

"A general lack of either the desire or the ability to apply themselves to their work appears in the case histories of about 85 per cent of the students who fail. Interwoven with this effect is an obvious lack of strong influence motivating the student towards intensive work—this is particularly so in about one-third of the cases. Of the 56 students who are of 'above average' (I.Q. 125 and over) two-thirds show that they are possibly prevented from doing justice to their intellectual promise through an inability to organise and direct their talents with clear-cut purpose."

Thus, the dull but conscientious student with high motivation, stimulated by parental pushing and contact with other students, can make a weak pass out of what to Monsieur Binet is, I.Q.-wise, a sow's ear.

At the other end of the stick is the student from a poor socio-economic background, in which he may encounter both resistance to his ambitions and little cultural stimulation. These are often the "loners" who come from the country or small state schools and start off with the initial disadvantage of knowing no one on campus. Often they never break the ice.

Students from such schools and also from Roman Catholic schools have been shown to perform consistently worse at university than others. The reasons for the latter are a matter of contention, but may be connected with a finding of Flecker at

* The data on this subject is based on Naomi Caiden's excellent survey. See Further Reading.

† See Further Reading.

the University of Western Australia that one of the few personality characteristics that often differentiate the potential failure from the pass student is that of conservatism. He concluded that of the failing students a disproportionately large number were lacking in an experimental and critical approach.

Melbourne's R. R. Priestley* gave some indication of the more florid problems that a student can face, to the detriment of his studies. He interviewed about 1000 troubled students at Melbourne University each year. This is the breakdown of their problems:

TABLE 3

1. Personal disturbances, involving serious disruption of a student's life: psychoses, severe depression, severe family conflict, severe sex problems, etc	60 students
2. Personal disturbances involving severe handicap but not serious disruption of life: states of anxiety, social isolation, and less severe disturbances of the kind mentioned in 1	100 students
3. Doubts and anxieties about future vocation	270 students
4. Educational difficulties: difficulties in settling down to study and difficulties in learning and reading	210 students
5. Minor difficulties requiring brief information and advice	220 students
6. Financial difficulties	90 students
7. Other problems	50 students



The Public Life of a University Student

The university year consists of three terms: Lent, Trinity and Michaelmas, as they are known, by no means universally. At the beginning is Orientation, which in some universities comprises a week-long carnival-atmosphere programme of symposia, brains trusts, dances and other more or less ill-organised entertainments. At the end are the annual examinations, the Recovery Balls and a three-month vacation, during which many students seek part-time employment.

A few faculties have end-of-term examinations, sometimes not obligatory, but more commonly this is the time for essays and the handing in of completed practical work. In the first half of the year, with the notable exception of Victorian universities, there is

* See Further Reading.

a celebration variously known as Commem/Prosh/Foundation Day (U.N.S.W.)/Bush Week (A.N.U.). Where appropriate, it commemorates the founding of the university or graduation day and there is invariably a collection for a Good Cause to palliate the doubts of the city fathers. There is usually a procession, a special issue of the student paper and stunts, which invariably reveal the enfeebled creativity and organisational ability of the student body.

Out of term, the university carries on, catching its breath, though the mistaken view of most undergraduates is that it ceases to exist when they are not there. In term, it provides a regular focus of attention and whipping-boy for a variety of do-gooders, as well as the daily Press. It is the rabbit up the Press's sleeve, a kind of highbrow scandalous strip show to be conjured up and

exposed in all its infamy whenever the news is a bit slow.

The community sees "university students" as a whole—in contrast to the amiable and mild-mannered specimens they happen to know personally — as a pack of scruffy adolescents with the mentality of an anarchist and the morals of a rabbit.

Thus, university students, willingly or unwillingly, are judged by their most vocal members, the ones who at a drop of the hat can be relied on to demonstrate, talk to the papers and appear on television. These students are usually of the Push Button Rationalist variety, Instant Humanists to whom one has only to add a middy of "Old" to obtain the whole of their articles of faith. These run something like this:

- Prof. Orr was a Good Thing. It was better that Tasmanian students be deprived of teachers than that anyone should so besmirch their honour as to accept an academic post there.
- Dr. Knoepfelmacher is a Bad Thing and, while the means of keeping him out of Sydney University were somewhat questionable, these were more than justified by the end.
- The Vietnam Question can be simplified down to a fight between imperialists and nationalists of a humanitarian bent.
- The Government is always wrong. If it doesn't do what we want, it is "reactionary"; if it does, it is "too little too late".
- God is a false rumour, and the Queen is a joke in bad taste.

In short, every issue can be seen in terms of black and white, except racial discrimination, which could be immediately solved by importing 20 million coloured folk to our shores.

Extra-Curricular Activities

In their study at the University of Sydney Philp *et al.* concluded:

"Among the activities and groups, sporting and social activities seemed to receive the greatest support and participation; these were the only activities in which more than one-sixth of the undergraduates reported more than a little participation, and for these, about another quarter indicated some activity. Religious

groups received allegiance, and some participation, from about one-third of the undergraduates, half of whom participated more than a little. The faculty societies and cultural and academic groups lacked strong, active support, though about one-fifth of the students showed some participation. Political societies seem to receive negligible active support, and an extremely limited passive interest, while participation in student government and student newspaper activities were confined to a very limited number of students."

This is a pretty fair picture of student extra-curricular life in most universities.

On the average, if a student is going to participate in anything it will be sport. This is not necessarily team sport and may be merely an occasional use of the gymnasium or squash courts or, in the south-eastern states, a fortnight of *après-ski* at the Uni hut in the snow country.

The real sporting heavies are a race apart. At the apex of the hierarchy are the Internationals, usually in athletics, swimming or rugger. Then there are the Blues and finally the team members of the various university teams. Obviously, the more glamorous the sport, the "heavier" the hero.

Some of the brawnier sports, such as rugby, draw their ranks primarily from an older age group, which puts faculties like Medicine and Law at an advantage in the inter-faculty competition. A good student sportsman who is perpetually interrupting his studies for a Wallaby Tour or The Games may become quite elderly before he achieves graduation.

After sport in popularity comes religion. For students, Godliness is next to sportiness; by reputation the University of New England is the holiest campus.

The Student Christian movement, protestant and non-denominational, is Australia-wide and the most powerful. It is liberal in attitude and the most likely to engage in dialogue with the humanists, who in many universities also organise themselves into a society. Strangely, because of their liberalism, the S.C.M. is often closer to the Newmans — the usual name for the Roman Catholic Society — than the Evangelical Union (E.U.) which is the rallying point



Uni. Left Wing.

for hot gossellers and the more inflexible lesser Protestant sects. There is often an Anglican Society of High Church persuasion, as well as groups of Seventh Day Adventists, Muslims, Ba'hai, etc. The Jewish students have their own *national* organisation.

Anti-religion is usually confined to blasphemous outbursts in the student Press. At such times the various religious societies settle their ideological differences and gather up their indignation about them. "Outraged" of Arts III speaks for more than half the university.

Political Spectrum

In most universities there is a small but influential beatnik group: "The Push". This tribe usually gathers at dusk each night around its watering-hole, some local pub that has become its temporary favourite. Here they exchange anti-social comment with the off-campus Push—writers, artists, musicians and advertising executives travelling incognito. Within the university these individuals sometimes bind together into organisations such as "People for Violence" in Melbourne. They are strong in peace groups, Civil Liberties and Vietnam Action. A notable exception to the general run is the Libertarian Society (Sydney): the only cause it has been known to espouse was that of the Bookmaker against the Total-



Uni. Right Wing.

isator, though it was rumoured that it gave informal support to the "Vote Informal" group.

Very often they find their natural outlet in the student newspapers, which are usually run by a small and loyally devoted staff, culled from the student politicians (who man the news pages and write sensational stories around themselves), the actors and The Push. These publications vary from regular fortnightlies to irregular weeklies, of varying quality.

At the beginning of the '60s Sydney's *Honi Soit* held dominance and set the model of a highly literary paper with witty features and plenty of white space. Then Adelaide's *On Dit* took the lead with *Manchester Guardian*-type layouts and a much heavier political emphasis. Two years ago the off-set process of printing, which allows much greater flexibility in the use of artwork, hit student journalism and Monash's *Lot's Wife* set the pace with a racy, sardonic style and a fairly nihilistic approach to party politics.

Australia's student journalism at its best is amongst the best in the world. Overseas, such newspapers are usually very parochial affairs, but here there is great emphasis on general social and political topics, presumably because of their lack of discussion elsewhere.

In other cultural pursuits, students do not

so often hit such high standards. Student dramatics rarely raise themselves above the level of amateur theatricals. The enormity of their pretensions seems never to be diminished by the banality of their productions. To compensate for their overall lack of

university is as conservative as the high preoccupation with religion would indicate.

In 1963, for example, the National Union of Australian University Students conducted a survey on student attitudes to the White Australia Policy with the following results:

Attitudes to change	W.A.	Adel.	Tas.	Melb.	ANU	Syd.	NSW	NUC	UNE	Qld.	TUC
Ease policy	68	70	71.5	81	68	71	59	59.5	72	6.3	52
Retain policy	13	8	5.5	8	11	10.5	21	8	12	11.5	28
Tighten policy further	16.5	18	11	6	11	12	13.5	21.5	13	12.5	6
No opinion	2.5	4	11.5	5	10	6.5	6	11	3	13	14

talent, student actors shroud themselves in the traditional beatnik trappings, and mystique, and manage to lead the gayest lives on the campus.

The First Australian Universities Arts Festival is to be held this May, at which all student cultural endeavours will be brought together into a fortnight's programme. Previously each activity has had its own Inter-Varsity and it has involved mammoth efforts of persuasion to induce the various groups to try something different. Potentially the festival may reactivate the failing strength of many of the cultural activities.

Apart from newspapers and dramatics, The Push may also take a hand in some of the more left-wing political clubs. These, in fact, are the only political organisations that can muster very much active support, apart from the D.L.P. (where it exists). The Liberal Club may boast the most financial members but it rarely makes any stimulating contribution to the political scene, preferring quietly to enjoy the feeling of being allied to the Powers That Be In Power and to invite an occasional federal "name" up to campus for a self-congratulatory address on the last 12 months of unprecedented progress.

The loyalties of the Left are, usually, divided between the A.L.P. Club, which is slowly being black-anted by the D.L.P.-ers, and a Labor or Socialist Club which, as often as not, disgraces the party by its extremist tendencies. For its small official membership the Left makes a lot of noise.

It is only when the occasional official survey is conducted that it is realised how little impact the Left really has on university attitudes for all its shouting. In reality, the

That year, of course, was before the recent easing of the policy by the Holt régime and it would be safe to say that in 1963 one would have expected an even higher proportion of educated opinion in favour of relaxation than this survey showed. The survey in fact revealed a phenomenon that has been confirmed many times: that in general Australian university students become more liberal the further from the equator they are. Thus, while the Queensland campus is famed for its "reactionary" attitudes, the most militantly "progressive" campuses are Melbourne, Monash and Adelaide. Tasmania, much smaller in size, is also militant.

Last year surveys were carried out on many campuses on conscription for Vietnam. To the organisers' bitter disappointment, university students are in favour of the Australian commitment to Vietnam, though opposed to sending conscripts overseas.

The final word on the general conservatism of student political attitudes is given in a study made by Katz and Katz at the University of New England.* Following students through their three years at university, these investigators found that during this time very little change in political or religious attitudes took place.

Student Government

The Student's Representative Council (S.R.C.) or Guild of Undergraduates or its local equivalent — a pseudo-parliamentary set-up, democratically elected by the student body — usually suffers the lowest level of participation of all the extra-curricular activities. It falls to the S.R.C.'s lot to organise

* See Further Reading.

Yet a nation faced with the problem of instilling vitality into an inert political scene and struggling to sow the seeds of an indigenous culture in a veritable wilderness should demand much more from its universities. The fact that it does not is a testimony to its own lack of vision.

University students are by no means the only ones with the responsibility for giving the country a kick-along, but they are well placed to have a go at it and the group who should be most aware of the need. Their cultural contribution is feeble; their political influence negligible and their graduates all too often have to undergo a crash-course in socialising before they are acceptable on equal terms with the rest of the community.

For this state of affairs reasons can be found:

- The academics who through lack of courage or foresight or defeatism failed to protest as the old universities expanded beyond their maximal size and became so large that their students no longer felt they "belonged".
- The administrators who not only did not protest, but actually connived at this process in their efforts to build up academic empires.
- The planners who have clung all along to the idea that a university should comprise squat buildings sprawled inharmoniously over a rolling landscape. Whatever the doubtful advantages of such design, any spread of a university puts the students at a geographic disadvantage in their efforts to come in contact with each other. To preserve

any student interchange the basic design for a university should consist of central general and library facilities, surrounded by high density faculty blocks so that they are within easy reach of all students. Open space is strictly for the periphery.

- The various authorities administering the existing scholarship and cadetship systems, most of which straitjacket student choice, confine intellectual interest and emphasize professional training at the heavy expense of education. Most universities are now screaming for *lebensraum*. In view of this, the valuable space taken up by colleges is an affront to those frustrated needs. Sydney University, for one, is now coming round to the idea of providing residential halls where students will have the choice between preparing their own meals or going to cafeteria-type dining rooms. There will be no "college spirit" to divert energy from the mainstream of university life.

This is obviously much nearer to providing accommodation that will bring students closer to the campus at a reasonable cost and every effort should be made to induce particularly senior year students to sever the parental apron-strings and engage in real undergraduate life as well as facing the challenge of self-sufficiency.

Given mature, self-reliant students and a campus geared to student demands in size and design, it is not impossible that universities may yet arise which will offer the community some real return for its outlay—not merely in trained professionals but in broadly educated misfits.

FURTHER READING

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