

WE ARE PEOPLE AFTER ALL

By Kevin Gauthier

Well, Dear Readers, I suppose you have noticed over the past two or three weeks that the pages of this honorable tabloid have borne a strikingly similar message from several different authors, that message being that something has happened in recent years to change the nature of this university and the students who attend it. Woe to those of you who found those deliberations disquieting, for they continue this week. (Incidentally, my apologies to anyone who took my article last week too seriously. I regret having caused you anxiety; but my advice to anyone who was perturbed by such light-hearted intellectual meanderings is that you find your sense of humour, Son, for life will be so much easier with it than without.)

Anyway, to continue the train of thought that has occupied this author for the past three weeks, I think we might have arrived at a point where we can draw a few conclusions and even, perhaps, forward a humble opinion as to what might lie ahead. The problem, simply stated, is that the typical liberal arts education for which this university, (and many, many others like it) was founded is suffering from two maladies, they being 1) such an education is considered to be, at best, quaint, and at worst, useless, by the highly industrialized society which exists in North America today, and 2) young people, under tremendous pressure to exploit the system for what it offers, have little time or inclination to diversify their basic "trade skills" education, and thus the traditional disciplines which comprise the humanities, (political science, philosophy, languages, etc.) are left to

aging academics and idealistic Artsies for preservation.

But let's be realistic. Regardless of how much growth can be promoted in business, or how much the wonders of nature can be exposed through the formulae and equations of science, I refuse to believe that this world no longer has use for political science, or philosophy, or fine arts. It may well be that a completely industrial society, whose only purpose is to produce more and more material wealth, would no longer require a population experienced in such areas of thought; but such a society would no longer require real people, either, just human productive machines. Fortunately for all of us, our society has not yet degenerated that far. But it is heavily industrialized. So, following the model, we today stress achievement in the skills necessary for success in the workplace, while at the same time we pay hollow lip-service to the "archaic" virtues found in liberal arts disciplines.

Thus, we see universities increasingly becoming institutes of higher learning in business and the sciences, while the humanities suffer a lingering death.

Fine. So modern society discourages arts training. Big Deal. Modern society can sit on its industrialized backside and grow old along with me. I, for one, do not particularly appreciate the direction this society is taking, and so long as I have a mind of my own, (however feeble it may be) I refuse to be dragged around where I don't want to go. So, here I am at the University of Prince Edward Island, in my senior year, studying political science. And despite my appreciation for all the marvelous things I have learned about men and society, I probably will die a man of very modest means, whose most profound regret was that I had nothing else on which to use my knowledge of men and society but for pacifying drunks while tending bar in some nightclub in Toronto.

But, maybe not. Maybe society will come to realize once again the value of an education in the humanities. It seems that we need to strike a balance, so that the demands of industrialization and the demands of our human nature might equally be satisfied. The problem today is that the scales are tipped too much in one direction, because of the weight given to the demands of industrialization. Let's not forget that we are people, who need to understand ourselves and each other; forgetting that little detail will eventually mean allowing ourselves to be lead like cattle into the slaughterhouse - satisfying the needs of the master animal, in our case the industrial society, and being spit out like so much garbage when we no longer satisfy the taste for flesh. Sound gruesome? You bet.



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