

AN ATTACK . . . or the results of not-so-silent mental masturbation

by stephen foster

The no-longer silent majority (?) was finally heard last week. Mr. Nixon should be gratified — it's not often he finds people with the same mental capacity as his vice-president. It's easy to see why the "majority" has remained silent for so long — and why they should have continued to do so. In the words of the immortal Peter Warrian, last-but-one president of the CUS, "the assinity and futility of mental masturbation is self-evident."

Other statements preceding this article should include that I am not a member of the Education Committee. I do, however, sympathize with their intentions. It is about time the students' union contemplated action along the lines outlined by the Education Committee. I hope the movement toward action will not be killed by the people still willing to drag their feet, ignoring the realities of the situation around them.

THE PREAMBLE

On the 15th of November I picked up a copy of the "proposed revision of activities and budget of UPEI student education committee". I recommend it as highly amusing trivia to those who have so far managed to pass it up. The rationalizations are enlightening to say the least.

In the first paragraph (p. 2) the anonymous writers declare that an Education Committee is relevant but should not be given its present high priority. I might ask what the priorities of students attending university should be if the leading one is not to be education? Evidently athletics, cheerleading, campus police, etc. should all come first. I thought education was the basic function of the university — and the search for knowledge, truth, etc. the primary objective of the student, indeed the whole academic community. But no, I learn student committees come first. It's a strange, strange world we live in, to quote a former hit record.

While I can see the "majority's" point about possible overlapping, in one case, I do not feel they have made a case for the 50% plus cuts they advocate. More on that later.

It is also contended that the Development Plan and other agencies (presumably Government) could, and would, deal with some of the projects more efficiently and effectively. Somehow I doubt that. I've never felt that government's were models of efficiency and effectiveness. There is also the danger that the Plan will become a political football — which would negate some of its value as far as accomplishing things goes.

PLEASE NOTE

The CADRE office number has been changed to 894-9585

I really begin to wonder when I see the equation between leftist and useless. The rationalization escapes me. If the people involved here are concerned with the left I might point out that the Plan they espouse could be said to have its origins with Marx — certainly the Soviet Union's five-year, ten-year plans are fore-runners of the fifteen year plan. I suggest a study of some sort into the history and philosophies of the left and less emphasis on the Readers Digest type of hysteria.

THE BUDGET

Community Work

The cutting out of the rent money and transportation costs is minor. I think, however, that it would be better to leave the \$50.00 in, in case a hall is not donated and in the event transportation difficulties arise. I would hate to see such a worthwhile endeavour lost because of such a small amount. The writers contend that it is "generally" felt (on what basis?) that these people should solve such internal problems themselves. I think it is better to spend the \$50.00 to ensure a start instead of forcing unnecessary problems into their path. At a later date the responsibility for these matters could and should be solved internally — but let's start by giving them a bit of a break.

The "rationale" behind the elimination of the Farmers' Union grant is ridiculous. While farmers may not be interested in student problems today they could become interested if students showed interest and sympathy toward their problems. Don't forget, and I see you haven't completely, farmers have children — and if your enrollment figures are correct, then they should be more concerned than anyone about student problems. The other 40% of the student body is not really familiar with the problems of the farmer — in an agricultural society I think it is imperative that they learn about those problems. If we work together, from a point of mutual understanding, then possibly we can help each other solve our respective problems. The problem with the Plan has been pointed out earlier in this article.

Literature

I notice in a number of cases you put the burden of printing material on the back of the CADRE. I think this is wrong for a couple of reasons. First, you are taking up space that could be devoted to particular local problems and second, national groups have lower printing costs. While the CADRE pays between \$40 - 50 per page the CUS can give you 2000 copies of an article (e.g. Student as Nigger) at the same price — or cheaper. I also believe that we should set up a separate library for particular periodicals, reference material, etc. so that it will be on hand for immediate use. Specific items could then be marked or clipped and placed in files for future use. These could be used to supplement the library's holdings.

High Schools

The situation in high schools is generally intolerable. It may be getting better, in some cases, but very slowly. I do not agree we should be overly concerned with public displeasure if we happen to start high school students agitating for needed reforms. The university should not follow a given society; it should lead. A certain amount of backlash always accompanies action — we should not back down in the face of censure promoted by self-interest and ignorance. I also do not agree that we should be concerned with censure by AUCC. If we must curb our freedom, our action, and our rights as individuals then we should not be in operation at all. I think this is just a red herring anyway, accreditation is quite routine, except in a few cases — none of which include community involvement. The high school visitation programs in the past have been successful only within their limitations — a broader program is necessary — yesterday.

cc and a-c

I think the course critiques and the anti-calendar could be combined, to a certain extent. The findings should be reported to the Senate for use as one guideline in determining re-hiring or firing of faculty. Obviously if a prof gets bad reports for three years running then there must be something wrong — either with the students or the prof. Evaluations of the courses should be printed in an anti-calendar. The outlines of courses in the calendar are sometimes wrong and, more important, the student has a right to know what other students have thought of the course.

communications

As pointed out before the CADRE cannot be expected to handle the total communications need of the campus. Nor will a radio help — not this year at any rate. It is necessary to provide for more outlets of information. This need not continue ad infinitum — as the newspaper gets better and bigger, and when a radio is in operation it may be possible to cut back this expenditure. Not this year, however.

slow and tell

There is a definite need for more speakers, films, and teach-ins. There is no need to cut back on these items. If there is a lack of interest today among students for these events interest will not be achieved by cutting down on the activities. There are students who are interested — why should they be deprived? Possibly going for quality rather than quantity is a good idea (re speakers). If, on the other hand, we can get qualified people, at cheap rates, then by all means we should do so.

bzzz - bxxx

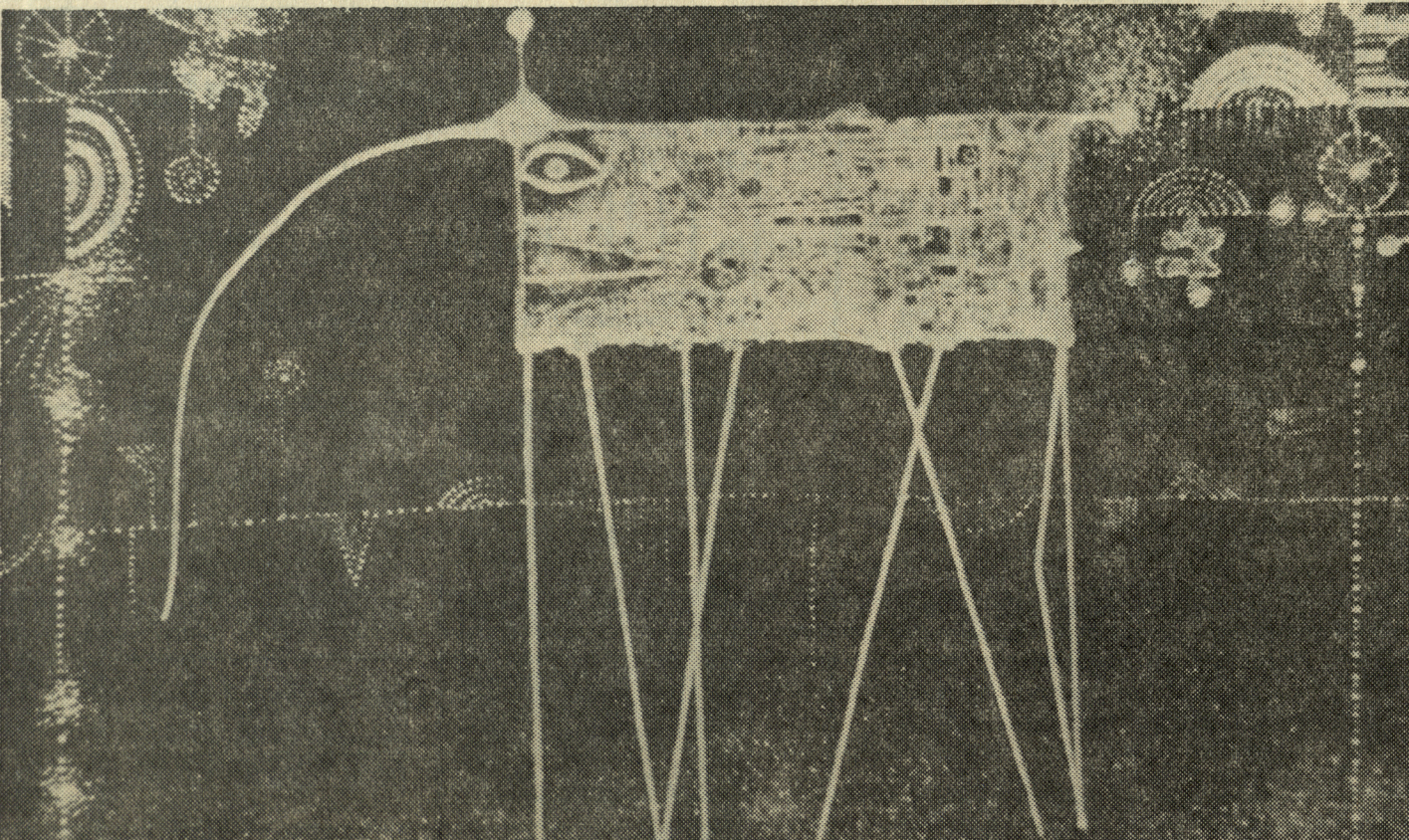
If the Union is prepared to pay for office supplies and telephone calls then this item could be eliminated. Agreement should be reached between the Union and the Committee before it is cut. This will prevent needless hassles at a later date.

hired help

A full time researcher is not a luxury — he is a necessity. The person would be of use to the student body as a whole. He, or she, could act as coordinator for the various projects as well as a researcher. My only question would relate to the possibility of getting a person for such a small amount. It can be done but the people interested are few in numbers — in other words we should act fast. The chairman's honorarium should be in line with the work done. If the full-time person is cut then tuition should be the least amount offered. With a full-time person \$255.00 seems to be a reasonable figure.

now

I think there is a definite need for a strong Education Committee, not an emasculated one as the "majority" proposes. The time has come for responsible, positive action. We must start to leave the ivory tower in order to maintain contact with the realities of the world around us. The search for truth, for the "good" (in the Platonic sense), has been dropped from the university curriculum. We must start that search again — but we must be active at the same time, accomplishing what is possible. And let us not forget the "majority" when we act. They need help as urgently as the under-privileged — possibly they need more help.



Piotr Kamler's SPIDERELEPHANT creates a fantastic science fiction universe in which the spiderelephant — an animal which is part spider and part elephant — searches for his genetic identity. Kamler's film from Paris is one of the 26 films from ten countries included in "The Kinetic Art," the three-program film series which will open Sunday, December 7th, in the Duffy Amphitheatre.