CHINESE STUDENTS ASSOCIATION

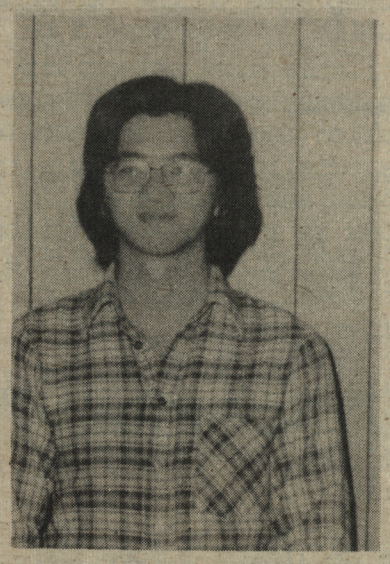
ALIVE ON CAMPUS

By George Barry

One might well wonder what it is like for a person coming from a different country, with a different cultural and linguistic background, to attend university in such a strange environment. This is the problem faced daily by the foreign students on our own campus. One group which has been organized to deal with this situation is the Chinese Students Association. In a recent interview with the SUN, David Kwan, president of the UPEI Chinese Students Association, explained the groups basic aims as well as describing some of its planned activities. As Mr. Kwan explained, the Association has been established, with the help of Mr. Baird Judson, the Foreign Student's Advisor, as a casual, socially-oriented group. Mr. Kwan described the Association as " a very casual one ... not regulated by any conventional rules or regulations ". Its members are grouped together, mainly, for the purpose of making their adjustment to their new environment easier.

With such things as film shows, skates and various other activities, the Association has attempted to make its members feel more comfortable by allowing them to meet and talk with fellow Chinese students facing similiar difficulties. When asked if the group was so structured as to allow other than Chinese students in its activities, Mr. Kwan replied that, while most activities are open to the community, generally, the main aim of the group was to provide for the needs of the Chinese students.

Mr. Kwan also made it clear that the International Students Association is recognized by his group as the parent organization. But the problems of adjustment that they face, so hard for the native Canadian student to imagine, necessitated the development of the Chinese Student's group. The problem of racial tension, always a difficult



thing to discuss, was candidly replied to by Mr. Kwan. He observed that, from his personal experience, he found nothing overly objectionable concerning the evil of prejudice on campus. He admitted that there had been incidents but that these had been few and far between. He considered the problem of racial tension to be a very minor one at UPEI but admitted that he had little to compare it with since this had been the only university he had attended since leaving his native Hong Kong.

Basically, however, Mr. Kwan viewed the situation at UPEI as being quite acceptable. Mr. Kwan did state that " as an organization there are certain things which are difficult to do ". The difficulty of arranging for activities which brought the Chinese Students into the larger university community is, for example, not easily surmounted. Mr. Kwan made reference to a certain uneasiness among his membership to become involved in such activities and recognized the danger of the Association causing Chinese students to become more isolated from the university instead of less. Mr. Kwan referred to the general fact that, considering the great expense to Chinese students for their education here, they have a desire to succeed at all costs, " to shut themselves into their rooms and study, to get the best from their studies, rather than joining any organizations". Mr. Kwan deplored this mentality but admitted that " many people tend to do this ".

This is the main problem which Mr. Kwan sees the Association responding to. He stated that " participation is very important" but he felt that the International Student's Association would be better equipped to handle this kind of participation. Mr. Kwan believed that the aim of his Association was to " get involved with the other parts of the community" also. The main difficulty, as he sees it, is the problem of limited resources. The relatively small membership of his group does not allow it to have a large scope for its activities.

Generally, however, Mr. Kwan indicated that the specific concerns of Chinese students, such as the tremendous rise in their tuition fees, the decline in foreign student enrollment etc., combined with the concerns of Canadian university students generally, are matters which, with increased involvement in the university community, the Association could become concerned. The organization has a good and necessary basis and points out a need in the university community. The culture shock of attending university in a country as greatly different as Canada is from the native lands of the Chinese students makes some sort of adjustmental structure a necessity. A university cannot be some sort of a limited, local venture, it must be an active part of the world as a whole. The ultimate hope of this earth lies in the unity of all its peoples and the university community must stand as an example of this ideal, otherwise the members of this community are left without some of the most valuable experiences of educational life.

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