

REPORT OF NON-GROUP ON THE UNIVERSITY

Overheard:

Mrs. John Doe, speaking to her neighbor as they drive to a School Board meeting -

"Oh dear, Edith. I should have known better than to try University Avenue at this time of day. All these students clogging the street! Honestly, you'd think the University would route these people away from the main thoroughfare. After all, we're the ones who pay taxes to keep up the city streets. . . . Anyway, as I was saying, Susie's fifth grade teacher says there's not enough room for one more desk in the classroom and that - - -."

Sam Student, crossing the street -

"Hey lady, watch it! D'ya see that, Joe? She almost clipped me. Probably in a rush to get home and take the roast out of the oven. Honestly, you'd think the city would route traffic away from the campus. . . . Anyway, as I was saying, this education prof said that the elementary school systems are bulging at the seams with so many kids and that by 1975 - - -"

This incomplete little drama is hypothetical, but it might have taken place today at, say, the intersection of University Avenue and Charter Street. It might take place next week, or next month. It is an attempt to highlight, by way of vignette, the fact that (1) there is a severe lack of understanding and of communication between residents of the city of Madison and members of the University-related population, and (2) there is a commonality about many of the burdens under which "University people" and "community people" labor.

Universities grow, and cities grow, But when both processes are happening simultaneously in a common geographical context, tensions are compounded. The "town/gown" syndrome is accentuated in Madison by the increasing concentration of large numbers of people in the University area. To be sure, the chasm between the academic community and the non-academic community is not a new phenomenon. Mrs. John Doe and Sam Student have always tended to perceive each other on the basis of cliches and stereotypes, rather than on the basis of human realities. Citizens at large have no concrete understanding of the styles of life that are operative in the University; only those events which are extra-

ordinary (such as student riots, protest demonstrations, etc.) are brought to the attention of the general public. Likewise, students are apt to remain woefully ignorant of the forces and of the people present in the extra-university locality. College as "a time apart" is a mythology that persists, buttressed by the notion that adults who are not involved in University life are not worth being taken seriously. There is no creative dialogue between constituents of the University and constituents of the city. As a matter of course, it follows that there is no hint of the idea that individuals in the University and individuals in the city are members of one constituency.

It is our feeling that if members of the citizenry and members of academe were to speak to one another with the intent of hearing and understanding the "others", a two-fold result might be hoped for: (1) University people and Madison residents would be able to describe to each other the particular complexities and discontents with which each group is struggling in its own life - situation, and (2) it would be evident that many grievances are shared by both groups and can be attacked by both groups. The phenomena related to the numerical growth of both city and University do provide a special setting for the "town/gown" problem these days. The very anachronism of the terms "town" and "gown" testifies to the new environment. Specifically then, the situation in which both University and city persons are involved seems to be characterized by massiveness and congestion, by baffling mazes of bureaucratic machinery, and by the isolation of the individual from decisional power and from social encounter. Even more specifically, it seems to us that there are certain logistical, aesthetic, political, recreational problems which cut across the boundaries of University and city and which impinge upon anyone who lives in Madison for any length of time. We suggest that such concrete issues (e.g., traffic problems) might provide points of contact around which even undergraduates and furriers might rally.

The remainder of this paper will be given over to a sketchy outline:

I. We shall attempt to suggest a few of the issues which plague persons in the University, qua University. Because the University is not one group, but a matrix for various sub-groups, segments of the University have been delineated, and some problems peculiar to each have been listed. The list is certainly not definitive; some of the items mentioned are debatable ones and may reflect hear-say rather than truth.

A. Undergraduates

1. Enormity of the University and its impersonality as reflected in
 - a) lack of personal context for faculty-student relationships
 - b) living units that are sterile by virtue of their bigness and sameness.
2. Inadequate recreational, educational facilities (e.g., need for gyms)
3. Isolation of students from each other, due to pressure from the academic system -- no time for development of meaningful relationships, for reflective and/or experiential learning.

B. Graduates

1. Financial difficulties
2. Lack of time for broadening own interests vis a vis interdepartmental contexts, personal relationships, cultural opportunities, etc.
3. Vocational uneasiness
 - a) competition within departments, for jobs, etc.
 - b) problem area pointed to by the slogan "publish or perish."
4. Inadequate library facilities (lack of carrel space, interdepartmental loan services, etc.)

C. Faculty

1. Demands made upon time.
2. Criteria for professional advancement as related to
 - a) tenure and departmental status
 - b) the imperative to publish in order to achieve vocational security.

D. University Personnel

We don't know what their difficulties are. Attempts should be made to find out problems of secretaries, custodians, other U.W. employees.

E. Administration

1. Undercurrent tension between teaching faculty and administrators.
2. Massiveness of University from standpoint of decisional responsibility, policy-making tasks.
3. Need for personal involvement with students.
4. Public relations.

F. Other sub-groups which either cut across or are tangential to the above categories, and which have particular problems

1. Foreign students
2. Negroes
3. Teaching assistants
4. House fellows
5. Wives of faculty, students, administrators
6. Staff of non-official political and religious groupings

II. Six problem areas are suggested as issues which are relevant to all members of the University community. We suspect that these same concerns are pertinent to Madison people without University affiliations, no matter how different the variables and perspectives may be. Such concerns might be vehicles for the University-community dialogue -- to be approached, not as sore spots between the two, but as ground for interpretation and for action.

- A. Traffic problems (parking, bicycling, walking, etc.)
- B. Law enforcement
- C. Cost of living in Madison
- D. Housing

B. In conjunction with arousing ferment around concrete University issues, efforts should be made to give the Madison community a sense of the University situation. News coverage is crucial at this point. Interpretative articles, written not only by reporters, but also by students, faculty, University personnel themselves; TV and radio interviews; documentary and photographic studies -- all such means would be vehicles for giving residents of the city a more accurate picture. In order for these possibilities to materialize, the news media must be approached and urged to commit their energies to such efforts. Even greater potential might be borne by the application of the "open hearing" idea to the University-city interpretation. Panels or teams of members of the academic community could appear at P.T.A. meetings, neighborhood gatherings, civic clubs, businessmen's luncheons, suburban churches, etc. for the purpose of unpropagandized conversation. On a less formal level, certain related groups in the University and in the city (such as the churches) might provide natural contexts for social gatherings ("Community Firesides," so to speak). Vice versa, den speakers and dinner guests in University living units might well be drawn from the non-academic community. Persons responsible for dormitory programming should be contacted to this effect.

The cultivation of neighborliness, however, is sometimes a stale and vacuous affair. For this reason, we suggest that the concrete issues mentioned in Part II above (traffic, etc.) help to provide the focal points for grass-roots community-University discussion. Compilation of data is again recommended: listings of existing channels that appropriately concern themselves with these matters (e.g., WSA Committee on Fair Business Practices, Faculty Committee on Community Relations, etc.); listings of material available, such as the recent report of the University Committee re: the growth of the Madison campus, City Council records on actions taken with respect to the University and its environs. Data does seem to be scarce, however, and we feel that there are many unanswered questions which need to be investigated: are prices at the University end of

E. Recreational, cultural facilities incongruent with the size of the population (e.g., movie theaters, parks; no civic center as yet; frequent "sold out in advance" events)

F. Participation of the individual in the municipal and/or university system

1. Need for appropriate channels
2. Need for awareness of those channels which already exist
3. Need for personal initiative and involvement.

III. We have put down some random suggestions as to what might be done.

A. Forums, retreats, discussions, articles, questionnaires, etc. should be used for tapping opinion and for mobilizing action on grievances within the University setting. First of all, the real questions that are bothering people need to be discovered. Then the crucial issues should be given dramatic attention, not just by experts or special committees, but by all those involved and affected. We suggest that data be compiled on particular issues (such as faculty promotion) and include a) listings of groups giving the matter consideration, b) listings of material available on the subject, c) explanations of where official and/or unofficial responsibility lies, of what the procedures for change are, and of what alternatives might be possible. Position papers could be solicited. Even more graphic than the "White Paper" approach would be public discussion -- a flurry of open hearings throughout the University. Symposia of departmental chairmen, senior and junior faculty, graduate and undergraduate students might grapple with the faculty promotion question. The localized "town meeting" tradition might be usefully applied to such questions as administrative policy re: picketing in the Union, curricular offerings and degree requirements, etc. Both in discovering discontents and in marshalling action and opinion, existing structures should be used insofar as is viable. It is often the case, however, that the University public does not know or care about the existing structures. There is a certain connotative advantage to the announcement of open hearings, as over against the routine occurrence of Student Senate sessions.

State Street higher than those on the Square? To what degree does the quality and economy of housing in the University area differ from that available in other parts of the city of Madison? Are students and faculty in the U.W. Department of Urban Planning actively involved in the concrete problems of the city? We suggest that extensive work be done in gathering all available information about the interaction (or lack of same) between city and University, and that the results be disseminated on a broad scale to the academic and non-academic communities. People in Madison and at the University should be made aware of how they are already involved in each other's lives (e.g., economically). The tutorial work of faculty and students at the South Side Neighborhood House is a paradigmatic fact well worth knowing about. But even more urgently, town folk and gown folk need to find out how they might be involved further in each other's lives on the basis of some overlapping concerns.

In particular, students need to be made aware of the possibilities for political activity on their part as Madison residents. We think that students should be encouraged to attend City Council meetings (not just on special occasions with special axes to grind), to register and vote, to work in municipal elections. Chances are that aldermen at least might begin to consider students as citizens. Students may not consider themselves as citizens. But they do seem to care about the hazards of being pedestrians in the campus area (N.B. the Southeast Student Organization's bill urging the city authorities to consider traffic light problems) and about garbage collection. Since non-academic people seem to care, too, about traffic lights, and since they are frustrated when their voices are not heard in the halls of authority, it seems to us that persons in the University should carry their civic concerns to the populace as well as to the City Council, and should seek indigenous community support. State Street congestion, high retail prices, etc., should be brought up for discussion at open hearings and social events, on campus and off, where both University and non-University persons are present. (Southeast Student Organization should perhaps canvass city

neighborhoods for signatures petitioning the City Council to take steps on traffic problems in the campus area.) Such attempts would at the least spark some interesting conversation; at practical most, individuals at U.W. and in the city might combine efforts to force civic action upon some pressing issues. In the process, legitimate conflicts of interest might come into honest focus, and the town-gown situation might be healthier for having had the barriers exposed.

We suggest these next steps for the Saturday group:

Begin compilation of suggested material or find other groups to do so.

Contact groups on campus and in the city that might provide space and impetus for community-University dialogue in the form of social events or public meetings.

Contact the Mayor. He is having open hearings of his own, in neighborhoods throughout the city. We need to know: 1) Is he planning to conduct such hearings in the University area? On campus? 2) Is the University population being made aware of this opportunity through wide-spread publicity?

We still entertain the possibility that many or even most University people are not interested in civic affairs. The moves suggested within the U.W. setting for examination and action with respect to its own affairs should be actualized. But we continue to think that there are some civic gripes underneath most everyone's skin which might be dealt with positively and which might point us toward more viable community.