

"the university should hold a mirror up to the community"

INTERVIEW WITH L. U. DEAN OF STUDENTS

□ As Lakehead University enters the 1970's, LU Week interviewed a man who stands in the centre of the university community. Dean of Students John Kerr has been with Lakehead University since 1966, and has lived in Canada since 1931 when he came to this country to study at McGill University in Montreal. It was during his university years at McGill that Dean Kerr decided that he would like to enter the ministry. He was ordained an Anglican minister in the diocese of Algoma and was in parish work for twenty-eight years. The last sixteen of those years he was also engaged as a lecturer in the faculty of education at McGill. Dean Kerr is married and has three children. His son is doing graduate work in the United States, he has a daughter in her freshman year at Lakehead University and he has another daughter eleven years old. Dean Kerr thoughtfully answered a series of questions on various topics.

AREAS OF RESPONSIBILITY OF THE DEAN OF STUDENTS

I am responsible for student awards on the graduate as well as the undergraduate level. . . we do the mechanics of the awards, we don't choose the people. I am also responsible for medical or health services, and ultimately responsible to the president for life in the residences. Further, I work with the foreign students and have a liaison function with student placement. Also, I act in advisory capacity to all students and to the AMS judicial council in its function of non-academic discipline.

THE ROLE OF DEAN OF STUDENTS IN THE UNIVERSITY

The Dean of Students' function is to serve the purposes of the academic community. Though not technically an academic role, it is nonetheless, an educational role. I'd say that first of all I preside over a team of people who are working to maintain a sufficiently high degree of well being in the student so that he can take full advantage of the opportunities of the academy.

Secondly, in dealing with the individual, not only are we trying to maintain a degree of well-being, but we are trying to do something else which is inextricably intertwined, and that is to encourage the student to take a hand in his own development as a human being. I also deal with the quandaries which students find themselves in - perhaps in choice of vocation - they may wish to talk this over with me first. Sometimes they want to talk over problems with courses, and I direct them to the appropriate academic

sources. Sometimes they want to discuss whether they should continue in university. Still other times they come and talk over their personal problems with me. By and large these students do not require clinical attention but they are normal students who find themselves in a quandary.

I would say that I get to know personally a large number of students. I can't always put a name to a face, but in the course of the year I see over half of the students. Most students come to my office with questions regarding student aid. Money is as much a concern for students as it is for anyone else. Being financed is certainly an element in maintaining a sense of well being.

STUDENT DISCIPLINE

There are no more problems of discipline in the university than you would encounter in the community. I believe in treating students as adults, I believe they are adults, and I believe we have to provide them with the atmosphere in which they can become complete adults. They must learn to discipline themselves.

I helped to set up the judicial committee of the Alma Mater Society and am associated with them in an advisory capacity. Actually, I don't have much dealing in disciplinary matters except as a very last resort. Most of the charges are for disorderly behavior at dances. I must stress that I am not responsible for academic discipline. The students of the AMS discipline the students. That started when I came here in 1966.

THE UNIVERSITY AND THE COMMUNITY

I don't think it would be true to say that the students here are isolated from the community. A large number of stu-



dents live in the community and are hometown boys so to speak. I think by its very nature there is a certain separation between the community and the university in the sense that at all times, the university should hold a mirror up to the community. I think the university suffers in carrying out its function when it becomes merely - and the operating word is "merely" - a mirror of the community. The university should be linked to the community inasmuch as we would hope it might serve the community. However, this is a rather different thing than saying the university is just a mirror of the community.

I think that in the course of his studies a student should develop certain norms about society. He should develop his mind and his insight through the pursuit of knowledge so that he can give society informed criticism based upon the norms he has developed.

THE GENERATION GAP

I myself don't find a generation gap with students. This may be perhaps because I'm a bit retarded! I think that the generation gap exists when the people of my generation refuse to be themselves. There are two things which cause the generation gap: when people of my generation try to appear as though they belong to the younger generation, and when people of my generation forget that the world has a lot of problems that the younger generation are going to have to face if the human race is to survive at all.

DIFFERENCE IN GENERATIONS

I think the present university generation is drawn from a much wider sector of society than in my day. This generation of students is much more socially conscious, much more honest with themselves and more open. The present student is a very moral person, but with little patience with mere



moralism, that is to say with a negative code. He has a much broader idea of the moral dimension.

This generation is threatened by several things. First of all, nuclear catalysm. This generation can charge my generation with befouling the environment and tolerating pollution of the water and air to a very dangerous degree. I think they can equally charge my generation with not being overly concerned about the anti-human use of knowledge. This generation is very much concerned with the integrity of the person and I would use the word wickedness advisedly even though it springs from my past.

STUDENT RADICALS

I think there is a tendency among some student radicals to be preoccupied with simply destroying without any clear idea of what they will put in the place of that which they would destroy. However, I think this is a natural reaction to the sort of attitude which says these things have always been and always will be.

CONCILIATION

If you mean by conciliation, compromise, then compromise can be a subtle way of retaining the status quo; but if by conciliation you mean reconciliation to two facts then it is a different story. One of these facts is that man is an imperfect being, a divided being, and alienated being, and that his alienation is reflected in his society. Now, whether society causes the alienation or man's imperfections gender his alienation I don't know. It is the old cliché about which comes first, the chicken or the egg.

STUDENT AIDS AND GRANTS-FEAST OR FAMINE?

Students have this idea that one year the government is more generous than the other, but this is just not so,

The actual formula does not change from one year to the next. As a student progresses in university he is expected to have saved more money each summer. Government grants are worked out on fairly rigorous tables. I think most people would agree that the tables have not caught up with the rising cost of living.

FREE UNIVERSITY

I think free university would imply, and would have to imply quite rigorous standards. Obviously the taxpayer isn't going to put up with any waste of money. By rigorous standards, I mean rigorous academic standards, I think free tuition plus a maintenance allowance for those who needed and deserved them would solve a great many problems but I don't see this for another ten or twenty years.

BUSINESS AND THE UNIVERSITY

Business and industry now seem to be reluctant to recruit people who have merely the general BA, but this is the fault of the industry. Since the second world war the shibboleth of industry seems to have been "every office boy with a BA". I don't think it ever was the purpose of a general BA to be training for a business position. It was simply the entrance to further study for a profession.

IN THE NEW YEAR

In the New Year we hope to have a psychiatrist from the Lakehead Psychiatric Hospital visiting the campus regularly to see students who wish help. The director of health service with my encouragement has been responsible for negotiating this.



We need a good counselling service. The counselling service would, I hope, be an integral part of the university community and would deal with students who have problems connected with vocation, education, or of a personal nature, and whose academic progress is temporarily impeded by this. This will take time, nonetheless, I think it is a need and is especially a great need if we are going to broaden options.

PROGNOSTICATIONS

I never make prognostications.

PHILOSOPHY OF A DEAN OF STUDENTS

I wouldn't dignify my approach with the term philosophy. I think that I have to exercise a non-religious pastorate, inasmuch as I have to try to be concerned that whatever I am or whatever I do must always encourage in the student a desire to make use of all his possibilities. You do the best you can each day.

. Personal interview by Jim Vandervier

WEEKLY EVENTS

MONDAY, JANUARY 5

2:30 pm	Extension and Summer School Meeting	Little Din. Rm.
6 pm	Mathematics Seminar	Little Din. Rm.
8 pm	Lk. Choral Group Rehearsal	Aud.

TUESDAY, JANUARY 6

6 pm	Mathematics Seminar	Little Din. Rm.
8 pm	Cambrian Players Reh.	Aud.

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 7

6 pm	Mathematics Seminar	Little Din. Rm.
7 pm	AMS Meeting	Bd. Room
8 pm	Lk. Choral Group Reh.	Aud.

THURSDAY, JANUARY 8

6 pm	Mathematics Seminar	Little Din. Rm.
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FRIDAY, JANUARY 9

7 pm	Cambrian Players Reh.	Aud.
8 pm	"Intimacy Concert" featuring the Princeton String Quartet - Beethoven Bi-Centennial Concert	Res. Din. Rm.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 10

8 pm	Manitoba Contemporary Dancers	Aud.
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SUNDAY, JANUARY 11

2 pm	Cambrian Players Reh.	Aud.
7 pm	W.U.S.C. Meeting	Rm. 1023
8 pm	Lakehead Choral Group Rehearsal	Aud.

**** All events subject to last minute change. ****

Lakehead University

WEEK

Published weekly by the Dept. of Information Services at Lakehead University, Oliver Road, Port Arthur, Ontario and distributed free of charge to faculty, students, administrative staff, and friends of The University. Copy should be sent to the Information Office, Social Centre, University Residence.

Vol. 2, No. 17

Jan. 5, 1970

Department of Information Services

Judy B. Breakey, Assistant

Gail Keffer, Secretary

Return postage guaranteed by Lakehead University, Oliver Rd., Thunder Bay, Ont.

NORTHERN STUDIES RESOURCE CENTRE