

Residential Colleges: New Directions Needed

To those folk accustomed to the campus at James Cook University of North Queensland the first impression upon entering a university "down south" is one of size, perhaps excitement and maybe even a feeling of intellectual fervour. In due course the major impression caused by large classes, the remoteness of staff members, the impossibility of the Library conditions, the largeness of the Union, and the over-all frenetic scramble becomes one of isolation. Australian universities are impersonal, usually huge degree factories not greatly caring, despite occasional gestures, about the person and certainly never caring about any I-Thou relationships. And it is precisely here that some worthwhile contribution can be made by university colleges to the lives of those engaged in the academic enterprise.

Melbourne's half-empty colleges remain economically viable by taking in business men, clerks, and, as Tutors, graduates working outside the university. The Warden of a Brisbane college remarked that one companion college was already, and his own was well on the way to becoming, just a motel or boarding house. Students prefer to "do their own thing" instead of living in residential colleges, which, however liberalized, run to rules, set times and have a predilection for outmoded forms of group behaviour. The cultivated affluent middle-class universities have gone and so has the concomitant social class and life style of the colleges. There has sprung up in place of the old a new society and it appears that somehow the universities are changing to serve and feed it, whereas university colleges however outwardly and in their trappings they may have adapted, have not in fact changed at any fundamental level at all. Because of their uncertainty regarding their role in the modern university they have in fact made only those changes forced on them from outside and not sorted out inside at the root level what they are now called upon to do and how to do it.

One may not like the new style of university, it and the world it serves can be mindless, mechanistic, impersonal and quite horrifying. But somehow like the yeast leavening the lump the old unchanging and even ancient ideal holds grimly on. A university is a place to seek one's personal intellectual and other fulfilment. It is a place for learning and intellectual endeavour - and this is, furthermore, great fun; it is a place for mind and emotion extending, enriching and at all levels and in all sorts of ways deeply satisfying. It becomes a corporate experience as those of familiar pursuits and occupations come together producing a university that is a way of life based on an attitude to knowledge. For this kind of place to exist, and it doesn't at present and may never exist, the residential college can be the place for the spiritual vibrations of scholarship and the social and interpersonal enrichments of it to exist and, hopefully, flourish.

On the grounds that intellectual and all other forms of flowering don't occur in a vacuum but in an environment of personal interchange and, furthermore, that for the interchange to occur at its best and most profound in an

environment of goodwill and mutual good regard, the possibilities for residential colleges in the impersonal machines we now have as universities are enormous. Perhaps at a later stage the more detailed ramifications can, and certainly ought to, be worked out. So far it can be argued that university colleges can be one place, a special place, in the modern multiversity, where people have a chance to inter-relate, where the numbers in college are, compared with the scramble outside, smaller, and this in turn would allow inter-personal activities to occur. In the midst of the ant-heap a place to be yourself, to think, to feel and, maybe, love and be loved.

L.J. COLWELL.

Big bellied black
Eyed Pakistanis
Starved at me
In Newsweek.

I thought
How can we do that
to the poor Wogs
And heard myself
And knew.

PETER BELL