

SEMPER SPECIAL REPORT

by Ron Eedy

The "Erotica" Happening

The "erotica" happening, set down for the afternoon of July 16 (1969), just didn't happen. After some rain in the morning, a large crowd of students (variously estimated at anything up to 3,000) gathered in the Forum at 2 o'clock to be shocked, amused, or entertained, as the case may be. There was little to shock or entertain, possibly a little more to amuse.

Proceedings started with the appearance of a nude male student on the Library roof. (*believed to be Ross Gilbert, an architecture student, who's spread-eagled pose was very striking.*) This, in fact, turned out to be the highlight of the happening. Following this, Graham Rowlands read some erotic poetry. Then, for some time, practically nothing happened. The crowd, however, waited patiently for the obscene photos, pot, grog, and various other obscene displays to eventuate. The Press and TV men also waited patiently, while the strains of "Hair" wafted over the afternoon air.

Finally, the pornographic photos were brought out. Camera shutters clicked madly — Press, TV, students, and, what was to prove the most controversial part of the afternoon, Uni. Admin. photographers.

After an initial reaction to the photos, the crowd subsided into relative silence. Acting Vice-Chancellor Teakle, after addressing a lunch-hour meeting in the Relaxation Block and finding himself caught in the forum crowd, was offered a "marijuana" cigarette (actually a Benson & Hedges with the filter cut off) by a "paid agitator" who called himself Sativa which he accepted and took away for analysis.

Meanwhile, on the side of the Union Building, a large Beardsley had appeared, only to be torn down some time later. "Hair" had been replaced by the Mothers of Invention, but there was still very little action; the large crowd almost made movement impossible, let alone anything else.

Things brightened up when Pug Sanderson read a new policy speech, which, like his other one, would certainly have been banned from Semper. Laughter, cheering, a few calls of various four-letter words and other expressions.

Finally, the beer arrived, and was eagerly seized on. A wall of paper, for graffiti purposes, was stuck to the side of the Union Building, and soon filled. With little else happening, the eroticists soon faded out, leaving the Forum to a discussion on the presence of Uni. photographers at the happening (about which more follows).

"Obscene" Photos? — Part I

After Uni. Admin photographers were seen at the "Erotica" Happening on July 16 (1969), a forum was held to decide what action to take. Dick Shearman, Kim Bannikoff, Dan O'Neill, and other R.S.S.A. members addressed the audience, arguing that the taking of the photos represented an infringement of personal liberties, as these could later be used against them. Various students tried to speak against them but proved them too inarticulate.

Deputy-Chancellor Gherman was called up to address the meeting. He defended the action of taking the photos on the grounds that some people were offended by the display, and it was necessary to take action against the exhibitors to discourage them. He himself, of course, was not offended, nor were his Admin colleagues, since all of them were "men of the world" (heh, heh), but it was necessary to protect those people who were offended.

(Of course, the fact that no-one was forcing these people to come to the happening didn't seem to bother him; nor that, if they did come and were offended, they would only have themselves to blame, since they would have known what sort of thing was going to be there. Under such circumstances, it would be sheer hypocrisy to lodge a complaint. As for those people who lodged complaints and wrote letters beforehand, no-one was forcing them to view these things, if they didn't want to; in fact they were seeking to infringe the liberty of those who did want to view them).

After further discussion, a group of about 30 students walked over to the Admin building to see Acting Vice-Chancellor Teakle and ask for the film

from the photographer's cameras. Prof. Teakle and Registrar Connell came out to talk to the students. Contrary to the "*Courier Mail*" report, no attempt was made to enter the Senate Room; the students waited in the fifth-floor foyer for Prof. Teakle to come to them. A calm discussion then ensued. After a suggestion that the films be turned over to an independent party (e.g. Semper) was turned down by Prof. Teakle, it was eventually agreed that Teakle would show the photographs on Thursday afternoon to a delegation of three students, Kim Bannikoff, Dick Shearman and Errol O'Neill were appointed as the delegation. It was also agreed that Semper Acting Co-Editor Ron Eedy, who was present at the time, be invited along as an independent observer. This decided, the students marched down the stairs of the Admin Building singing "Bella Ciao" all the way.

"Obscene" Photos? — Part II

On Thursday afternoon, just after 4 o'clock, Kim Bannikoff, Dick Shearman, Jim Prentice (replacing Errol O'Neill who was unavailable), and Ron Eedy of Semper, ascended to the fifth floor, J. D. Story Building. With them came about a dozen supporters.

After being met by John Topley, Assistant to the Vice-Chancellor, who said that Professor Teakle was still at a meeting but would be along in a few minutes, Bannikoff, Shearman, Prentice, and Eedy were conducted to the Committee Room.

About five minutes later Professor Teakle and Mr. Connell entered, with the photographs in an envelope. Contrary to the agreement made the afternoon before there were no negatives.

After showing a number of innocuous photographs taken at the "happening", Prof. Teakle said that the students could have them. These, however, were only prints; no negatives were returned.

Then came a number of photos of various people holding up the placards with the pornographic photos on them. Prof. Teakle said these photos would be referred to the University's legal advisers to decide if legal action should be taken against the people in the photographs.

Asked by Jim Prentice if the Uni. photographers were regarded as acting as part of the policing of censorship laws, Prof. Teakle said no, they were acting for the University, in order to discourage the people who took part in such displays.

Kim Bannikoff asked why, since the students at the happening had obviously not been shocked, did Prof. Teakle set himself up as a moral censor? Teakle began to answer with the old ploy of "I've lived a lot longer than you fellows, and seen a lot more, etc., etc.", then wandered off into some talk about an obscene wall in the ruins of Pompeii.

University Security Officer Sharpe, who was present at the happening, was, per agreement, brought in. He said that his orders were issued by Deputy-Registrar, Bruce Green. Prof. Teakle said that Mr. Sharpe's duties were to watch for thefts, generally patrol the campus, and see that the general rules of the campus were observed. Asked why he had booked the people in charge of the S.D.A. showing of "*Far From Vietnam*" in 1968, Mr. Sharpe replied that he did so because it is against University Regulations to charge admission to University rooms. Questioned as to why he had not taken action against such groups as C.A.A., Abschol, W.U.S., C.A.S., etc., he said that no action was taken over the S.D.A. booking, so he had not made any since. Questioned as to why he had not made any bookings before that occasion, he replied that he "*probably had something more important to do at the time.*"

Asked what happened to the names of people booked, Prof. Teakle said they were submitted to the Vice-Chancellor to see if any action should be taken, and if it was decided not to act, the names were destroyed.

Sharpe was asked if he was asked to attend meetings of a political nature in the Forum; he said he was. Asked the reason for it, he replied: "*That's my business.*"

Question: Has there been a high proportion of thefts from the Forum?

Teakle: There have been none reported. But Mr. Sharpe does not go to the Forum for political spying.

Sharpe: I'm not interested in politics.

Teakle: There have been many requests from students for Administration people to attend the Forum. Mr. Sharpe goes there as an Administration representative.

Teakle said a bit later in the discussion that Sharpe went to the Forum as part of his employ, adding that "*he receives no instruction as to where to go during his employment.*" (Thus contradicting Sharpe's own statement.)

Prentice: There's a contradiction here: you (Teakle) suggest you have no interest in political activities of the students. If so, why is Mr. Sharpe at all the forums?

Sharpe: I'm interested in some politics.

Prentice (to Teakle): Well then, does he (Sharpe) go to the Forum as part of his employ or because of personal interest? How long a lunch-hour does he have? Why does he go to the Forum for three or four hours?

(To Sharpe) Are you asked specifically to go to the Forum? Why are you there?

Sharpe: A lot of interesting things go on there. I have no specific instructions to cover the Forum.

Prentice: So you go there off your own bat. Do you have to go there in the interests of campus security?

Sharpe: No, but there might be a brawl or something, and I'd be interested in knowing who was involved.

Shearman (to Sharpe): I brought up at the Forum that I saw you in 1968 with a file on Brian Laver.

Sharpe: I don't remember it.

Shearman: Do you deny having it?

Sharpe: No, I don't, but I don't remember it. I don't keep files anyhow. It was probably a report on some breach of the Statutes.

Prentice: So there is absolutely no record of political activities taken on campus?

Teakle: None.

Mr. Hollywood, the head of the University Photography Dept., was also present at the meeting. Contrary to the agreement, the other photographers who were at the Forum were not present.

Mr. Hollywood was asked if he had been specifically ordered to be at the happening, and by whom. He answered: "*Yes, we were asked to be there by Bruce Green (Deputy Registrar), to cover the meeting. We cover all sorts of activities on campus, visits by dignitaries, the opening of the fountain, and so on.*"

Question: Did you have any specific directions on the photos?

Answer: None, just to cover the meeting.

Question: Why did you take these? (indicating a number of innocuous photos).

Answer: Well, they were interesting group photos — (indicating one photo) this fellow took a photo of me, so I took one of him — fair exchange.

Question: Where do your photos go when they are printed?

Answer: To whoever requested them. Our only order was to cover the event.

The meeting finished at about 5:10. The innocuous photos were handed over to the students, but not the negatives. The other photos were kept.

.....*transcribed from:*

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