

Welcome to NYU

November, 1968

Contents

Orientation: Crashing Down to Bitter Reality	3
The Knowledge Factory	4

This is a copy of a leaflet given to all registering freshmen by the Orientation Committee at New York University.

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New York University Orientation Committee Introductory Packet

Orientation: Crashing Down to Bitter Reality

Welcome to NYU. From the prison of high school, it looked cool and inviting, full of new freedoms and the chance to learn something real for the first time. But as you get close to it, you'll watch it disappear. The job of orientation is to let you in on what's ahead, what will start when the sun rises on the first day of classes.

NYU is President Hester, dressed in the best suits that money can buy, threading his way through the bums in Washington Square Park on the way back to his penthouse. NYU is cops chasing blacks and hippies out of the park so the rich people can get to sleep. NYU is the president mourning the death of Martin Luther King while sitting on the board of a corporation deeply involved in Rhodesia and South Africa. NYU is special courses on the "science" of increasing consumer sales while Biafra starves. On the Lower East Side, cops drag furniture out on the street to evict a family while NYU teaches how to manage real estate holdings effectively.

Queers cruise on Eighth Street while NYU dormitories "freely" decide what time the girls have to be in at night. Dropout kids, their minds spaced out on drugs, sit on the steps along Macdougall Street while NYU teaches why our leaders know best.

While in every corner of this country a whole society is coming apart and a new age of social chaos is dawning, NYU invites you to join the Dodge Rebellion, the Pepsi Generation, and the jet set. After all, you are some of the smartest people they could find and you're needed on the team—the Nixon team, the Humphrey team, the IBM team—pick it, there's a slot for you somewhere. Guaranteed high pay and a nice apartment with 24 hour security guards to keep the niggers and anarchists out.

All this awaits you. Insanity rules—join in. Welcome to NYU.

If you're beginning to think you made the wrong choice, forget it. The curtain is lifting on the same scene at universities all over this country. Whether it's Berkeley, or Madison, or uptown at Columbia, students have discovered that the only way to learn anything is outside coursework and the only way to make life bearable is to fight back.

The university has become a training ground for industrial robots. You came here to get an education—to ask some basic questions about yourself and your values,

and to decide on how to embark on your adult life. Instead you will be whipped into shape for corporations and bureaucracies—given the right attitudes, force-fed the relevant information, and tailored to the slots NYU knows are waiting out there. Four years from now, you will be paraded like so many pieces of choice meat before the corporate recruiters or graduate school departments to be selected for a future in the air-conditioned nightmare. “Here’s one that mastered advanced calculus at 14, gives a damn about the people in our ghettos, goal-oriented, aggressive as hell, and knows that image counts.” If you don’t like all this, you’re free to join the bums in the park, but wouldn’t you really rather have a Buick?

Against all this, students are rebelling. They are not asking for more privileges for themselves—they are trying to fight their way out of a nightmare.

The Knowledge Factory

There was no sudden takeover of American universities. In the earlier part of this century, the small number of universities that existed quite obviously served only the upper class. It was a place where young men sowed their wild oats, learned a little about Plato and nineteenth century literature, and made the “connections”—marital and businesswise—that would allow them to continue their proud tradition. The newly arrived immigrants worked in city sweatshops and struggled to get their children through grade school, so they could learn to read and write.

But changes in the economic basis of this country forced the development of more and more universities and colleges so the manpower to run huge corporations, staff school systems, design advanced machinery and develop new technology could be trained. Trained, not educated. As the high school diploma had become essential for blue collar jobs, the college diploma became essential for white collar jobs. That did not mean white collar workers were moving into the ruling class; instead the universities were expanding to keep the economy expanding: going to college was your ticket into the working class. Old style “professionals”—doctors and lawyers—have become new style bureaucratic functionaries. Huge law firms serving mammoth corporations have turned careers based on individual enterprise into graduated steps in the corporate hierarchies. Doctors have their careers defined by their specialties inside huge impersonal hospital systems.

Education has become a major industry. The government plowed in tremendous amounts of money—“higher education in 1960 received about \$1.5 billion from the federal government—a hundredfold increase in twenty years.” (Clark Kerr, *Uses of the University*.) School teachers became the largest single job category in the country. An army of teachers—some three million at present—funnel standardized

curricula into the heads of the children of this country. Standardized information leads to standardized response—much easier to control the population that way.

The new industry, the “knowledge industry,” created universities of, by and for the corporations: “The university and segments of industry are becoming more and more alike” (Clark Kerr). Everything that could possibly be researched became part of the university’s role. Biological warfare, police training, weapons research, riot control, consumer buying patterns: at Michigan State a Ph. D. was given on “An evaluation of Thirteen Brands of Football Helmets on the Basis of Certain Impact Measures.”

On one level, it makes good sense for the universities to be run like businesses and for businesses. If the job of the university is to train technological workers, school teachers, corporate types, government bureaucrats and career diplomats, then it should seek the closest ties with industry and government. Clark Kerr points out that “the university is being called upon to...merge its activities with industry as never before..”; if that is to happen, it makes sense for President Hester to sit on the boards of corporations and for the Trustees to be chosen for their connections in industry and government.

But every student should realize that all the ideals of education are thereby thrown out the window. The training of corporate armies requires that people specialize as early as possible and define themselves by their occupation—knowledge is something that is pre-digested and distributed in the classroom, top down. Scientists must learn not to question the ends to which their research is put, government servants must learn the correct response in order to fit in. People at the universities can protest against the Vietnam war, as long as they don’t try to stop the training process or end the research: “praise free speech and pass the ammunition.”

The student rebellion is taking place at the universities because students realize that the meaninglessness of their college education is directly linked to the collapse of the whole society. In earlier years, students went South to protest racism, or to Washington to protest the war. But now they have come to see that the university administrations are the willing servants of these policies even as they mouth liberal values, and that the whole educational process has been warped to meet those needs.

Endless debates in the universities about freedom of speech and democratic values serve only to cover over the facts of raw power. The power to kill Vietnamese with pellet bombs, to keep South African workers in slavery, to murder black people in the streets of our cities rests on real control over the uses of the university.

We are face to face with our oppressors right here at NYU. We are told to choose our own prisons and to treat the artifacts of consumption as the substance of life. Meanwhile the killing and starvation goes on, as wise men in quiet offices decide

the fate of nations. Their hearts troubled just the right amount, they smile benignly at us and say, “so it must be.”

We say no. A change must come and it is being built among us day by day. Join our struggle.

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