

The New Education: FUD

Fifth Estate Collective

1966

Editor's Note: The following is an interview conducted by the *Fifth Estate* with representatives of the Free University of Detroit, a new independent educational institute which will open its doors at the end of the month. A full schedule of courses offered at the Free University is printed elsewhere in the paper.

Fifth Estate: First, what exactly is the FREE UNIVERSITY OF DETROIT? Where did the idea come from?

FUD: The idea itself has its origin in the original universities of the Greeks, say, and similar educational projects through history, when education—formal education—was an organic process; i.e. small group of people found an actual need for formalizing the educational process and got together to offer a unified program of learning which would be of use to other people around them. Paul Goodman describes such processes in his book *THE COMMUNITY OF SCHOLARS*, and of course there is a history of such organizations in this country e.g., for probably the best known example, the Black Mountain College movement in this century. Then there is the FREE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK that was started last year. That school is an entirely independent organization which has a decidedly more overt political base than we have, but the idea of it has been a great inspiration to us. In terms of how we got it started, there were several informal “classes” in contemporary poetry, jazz, and filmmaking. This was a part of the Artists’ Workshop. When the last issue of *NEW UNIVERSITY THOUGHT* did a story on it, we heard from the Free University of New York, asking us to affiliate with them and to expand our curriculum. Interest and response to the earlier program had been encouraging, so we got people together who we thought might be interested in offering courses of their own, held a few organizational meetings, and that was it.

Fifth Estate: I see. Where will the Free University be located?

FUD: We will be using the Artists’ Workshop building at least for the first term, as it’s already there, rent is being paid on it, etc., and there’s room for what we had in mind. That’s at 4857 John Lodge, just south of Warren Ave. We’ll have two classrooms downstairs, in the basement, and of course the whole first floor, which I think will give us plenty of space.

Fifth Estate: How does one get to be a professor at the Free University?

FUD: I would say that (1) he must be engaged in the work he will be dealing with in the course; (2) he must be able to convince the existing faculty that he knows what he’s doing; and (3) he should be reasonably articulate. If he can cover these areas all he has to do is set up his course and teach it. And as far as any student qualifications go, anyone who has the desire and the need to study here is welcome.

Fifth Estate: What would the expense be for a Free University student, then? Is there, for example, a tuition fee?

FUD: Yes, we settled on a flat tuition fee of \$10 per term per student, which would help us pay the rent and utilities, buy materials, etc.—though the members of the Artists’ Workshop Society see to it through their personal pledges of support That the place keeps open and operating. We also felt that unfortunately, this measure was necessary to insure some form of commitment from the students.

Fifth Estate: Okay, thanks for talking with us, and we certainly wish you luck.

FUD: One more thing, if you will: let us give the schedule for orientation, registration, classes, etc. Orientation and “open house” will be Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday, January 19, 20, and 21, from 4 to 7 p.m. and later on Wednesday and Thursday if necessary. This will enable interested prospective students to meet the faculty, talk about classes, and share other information. Then registration will start the following Monday, January 24 and go through that Friday, the 28th, from 4 to 6 and 8 to 10 each night. This will include actual registration for the courses, paying of tuition fees, text assignment, and related activity. Then classes will begin the next Monday, January 31, and run regularly from that time. Anyone desiring more information on the Free University can come by at that time (i.e. the 19th on) or for a catalog to the FREE UNIVERSITY OF DETROIT, 4857 John Lodge, Detroit 48201. And thank you for your interest.

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