

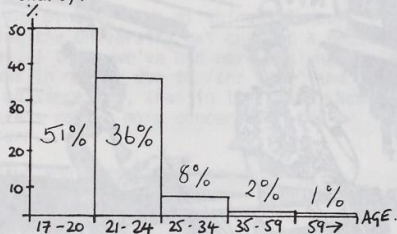


MARCH 1986.

when the Probe was launched

Facts and figures

This section defines the limitations of the sample. About 40% of respondents were women, leaving the men in a majority of 60%. This, believe it or not, is roughly the ratio of males to females in Scottish universities. The spread of ages of those who replied bunched at the younger end and fell sharply at the 25-34 category (see chart).



The vast majority of replies came from British students: 43% were Scottish, 29% were English, Ireland and Wales together polled 7½, leaving overseas together polled 7%, with 14% claiming simply to be 'British' in nationality. This leaves an Overseas figure of 7%.

Changing the criteria from nationality to major degree subject, almost exactly half of the replies we were from science students. The arts lot comprised 39% of the poll, and the social scientists - obviously too busy getting good grades (see 'Student Affairs') - were just 11%.

Student Affairs

'On a scale from 0 to 4, where 4=good, strong, positive and welcome, and 0=bad, weak, negative, unhelpful etc, HOW DO YOU RATE...?' This is what we asked the readers to do in assessing a range of issues concerning their academic work. Obviously, with such a large number of replies, there is a strong tendency for each answer to cluster around the average value which, on a scale from 0 to 4, is 2. A figure of 2.7 is, then, a very favourable result (statisticians will agree).

PROBE:

NO ARTIFICIAL COLOUR, FLAVOUR OR SWEETENER...

Intro.

One SIXTH OF THOSE WHO PICKED UP THE MARCH ISSUE OF BRIG COMPLETED AND RETURNED THEIR 'BRIG PROBES'. AS FAR AS WE KNOW, A QUESTIONNAIRE OF THIS extent has never been attempted here before. Ranks of generations of students

leave the University and their traces are invisible. BRIG, in its spluttering, sometimes gawky way has committed itself to being a record of those who have left. It has always been a partial record (both politically, and in terms of numbers) and so we decided to fly in the face of (conservative) criticism, to step on to the minefield of Social Science, in an attempt to say something broad and definite about the last academic year.

We want to consider the one sixth who replied as a cross-section of the whole. As a sample, this huge batch of replies is hardly scientific: the implicit assumption that every BRIG reader (about half of all students) is equally likely to complete the probe is flawed. Yet the trends are often distinct enough to be fascinating, and everyone loves a questionnaire.

These results are only a tiny fraction of the information which the Probes

make available. For example, we chose to investigate whether there is any correlation between where people drink regularly, and their party and personal politics (Do 'Grange regulars hold different views on pornography to Meadowpark regulars?). We could also have looked into the relationship between drinking patterns and sexuality or major academic subject or social class or perceived dress sense. Instead, we have selected what seemed the most important.

The categories - Facts and Figures, Student Affairs, Personal, Politics, overseas, day to day, SUSA, BRIG and Outside World - are those of the Probe itself.

Across the board, advisors of studies scored a respectable 2.4. If we break this down into subject categories, the science students' advisors do best with 2.6, the social-science advisors come quite far behind with 2.2, and the advisors of the arts students are exactly, plainly AVERAGE with a result of 2. Everyone, it seems, is very interested in their own academic work, as the average of 2.9 shows. (Tell that to the arts advisors.)

Perhaps the most interesting results lie in the respondents' assessments of the way their major degree subject is taught or organized. An overall figure of 2.3 hides broad differences between subject categories (tutors start sweating blood). Arts students are pleased with the teaching standards (2.6), social science is taught in an almost equally satisfactory manner (2.4), but science students on the whole are marginally dissatisfied with the organization of their courses (1.9).

There is an interesting but unclear correlation between the last set of figures and those which we called 'The importance of grades for your learning'. Arts and social science students indicated that getting good grades is of considerable importance in their learning process (2.4 and 2.6 respectively) but studying science doesn't, according to the probe respondents, involve the same emphasis on grades (1.5). The heavier emphasis on exams in science courses bears this out.

The library facilities are considered to be more than adequate by all the subject groups; the same, however,

can't be said of student perception of Stirling University's public image. It seems that very little has changed from the Queen incident in 1972 to The Times letter of last month: student perception of the University's public image is a very negative 1.4.



Personal

WELL THE RESULTS WERE NEITHER SIZZLING OR SENSATIONAL, REALLY, IN YOUR SOAR-AWAY BRIG PROBE, but maybe that depends on what you were HOPING FOR. Down to basics. Exactly three-quarters of those polled describe themselves as heterosexual. That leaves 12% bisexual, 5% homosexual and a shy (wise) 9% did not reply. Of the males who answered 6% were gay, and 6% of females were lesbians. This is an alarmingly radical difference to Strathclyde's figures in a similar poll which found that a majority were homosexual. Nevertheless, taking on board the percentage of bisexuals, the results fall just under the supposed national ratio between homosexuals and heterosexuals.

Does the fact that 28% of males masturbate regularly relate to concepts of LOVE? Who knows. The poll found that the number of men who said that love is "an experience preferred, but not essential" outnumber the women who similarly replied by two to one. For most people though (27%) love is a "long hot summer". 20%, interestingly, declined to

delineate any of the options. I'm afraid only 4% found love a "loss of dignity". "Swiss rolls" and butterflies seem rather passé now, but after all this IS the eighties.

One of the clearest equations unearthed was that men and women most definitely have different masturbatory habits. To put it bluntly, 10% of men never masturbate as opposed to 32% of women. 17% of men answered 'rarely', against 34% women. 28% of men answered "regularly" compared to 12% of the women respondents, and 20% of men "frequently", against 13% female. Significantly 24% of men did not answer whereas only 6% of women were not inclined to reply. It's best you draw your own conclusions on this section.

60% of those who replied then DID NOT "think that sexual acts constitute political acts". It's worth mentioning that the number of women and men who answered thus was roughly equal. This might not have been expected. On to the nitty-gritty - sexual relationships. More people are presently in a sexual relationship than not (54.3% against 40.5%). 5.1% (honestly) said neither. It's interesting that 52% of these relationships are with partners not at this university. I'm glad to say that PRECISELY 48% answered the other way round!

As many men (27%) as women (28%) find pornography harmful, the poll concluded. 31% of men considered it harmless, 26.5% of women answered likewise. On this issue, then, the votes went more or less three ways, which may indicate that the parameters of the debate cannot be accommodated into such a straightforward question-format. Finally, I'm not sure where loneliness comes into matters of sexuality, but the results concluded that three-quarters of those who replied are NOT lonely here at Stirling. A figure of 16% answered 'yes'. If loneliness can be defined as not knowing anyone like you, maybe it can be said that in the end this poll has HELPED as much as it has INFORMED.



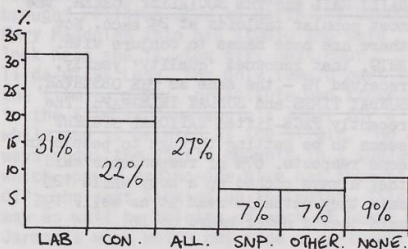
Politics

And now, onto your politics. The results of this section are probably one of the most eagerly awaited, and they certainly generated a lot of interest in the office as their compilation coincided with the Students' Association's presidential and executive elections of the week before last. The results provide the opportunity to re-examine some of the 'political' myths associated with Stirling University...Is it still a hot-bed of communists and radicals...?

The first question addressed those who were eligible to vote in the General Election of June 1983; that was 75% of the probe respondents. Of those who could vote, 30% did not, with 20% emphasising this as a conscious decision rather than merely being a result of apathy or ignorance. The respondents who did choose to vote three years ago represent a fairly even spread of political beliefs: Labour gaining 38% of the vote, the Lib/SDP Alliance 33%, and the Conservatives 27%. Smaller parties like the Scottish Nationalists and the Greens collectively polled only 2%

of the vote. 44% said their vote was tactical, 50% said not. Bringing these views up-to-date was the question asking which parties people would choose as first and second preferences if there were an election tomorrow.

If you could vote tomorrow...



The Labour Party topped the poll again with 31% of the first preference vote, followed closely by the Alliance taking 27%. The Conservatives still hold third place, polling 22% of the vote, and are the only party to experience a loss of popularity (5%) from 1983. The SNP polled 7%, and the remaining political parties - the Greens, the Northern Irish parties, the Communists and (unfortunately) the National Front composed another 7% of the vote. 9% said they wouldn't participate in the election.

Regarding second preferences, 30% said they couldn't choose one, and of those who could, an easy majority went to the Alliance with 24% of the vote. Labour were closest challengers with 16% of the poll: the remaining votes were evenly distributed among the others, including the ominous and alarming appearance of the National Front, which took 8% of the second preference votes (largely from those who had elected the Conservatives as their first choice).

95 of you named the political figures who reflected your own attitudes and beliefs. The suggestions ranged from characters as diverse as Alice Walker and Idi Amin, to Elias Canetti and Frank Zappa. 64% of the respondents produced 18 political figures about whom there was some sort of agreement. Predictably, Thatcher, Kinnock and Owen topped the poll with 8, 7, and 6% of the vote respectively. Another of the most popular figures was Martin Luther King with 6%, providing a reassuring counter-balance to the 2% who cited Enoch Powell, and the others who suggested Hitler and Mussolini. Other political characters jostling for votes were Tony Benn (6%), Michael Heseltine (3%), Shirley Williams (4%) and David Steel (4%). Also mentioned by 2% of respondents were figures like Peter Tatchell, Gorbachev, Bob Geldof, Winnie Ewing, Ken Livingstone and Dangermouse (always the jokers).

Bringing the politics closer to home, we asked: 'Is the teaching on your course politically biased?' 60% of you said 'no', 40% said 'yes'. For comparison, we divided the replies according to subjects studied: Arts, Sciences, and Social Sciences, and where the numbers involved were significant selected individual subjects as examples.

In the Arts people were virtually equally divided as to whether there was any political bias: 40% said 'yes', 44% 'no'. Of those that thought there was a bias, the majority (57%) believed it to be left-wing, 25% said

it varied and 17% considered it right-wing. Nearly 90% said they did not object, and interestingly, 40% of those thought there was no political bias objected to its absence.

The majority of science students (67%) thought there was no political bias in the way their subject was taught. Most of the 20% who said 'yes' were either accountants or environmental scientists.

The difficulties of generalization presented by the range of subjects within a category is illustrated in the Social Science group. Within this are included both the traditional subjects like Sociology and Psychology and also subjects like Economics and Business Studies. Taken together the figures revealed 39% thinking there was a political bias against 51% who thought not, and 7% who didn't know. Again a majority of 75% considered the bias to be left-wing, but only 56% said they did not object. Taken individually, 56% of the Business Studies students who answered the probe thought there was no political bias compared with 44% who thought there was, and the nature of the bias was evenly divided across both the left and right-wing political spheres. Slightly more people objected to the bias than did not. Most Sociologists on the other hand agreed that there was a bias (70% against 30%) and they all believed it to be left-wing. 60% did not object.

It is interesting to identify the subjects students believed to be least and most politically biased. Unsurprisingly, the Pure Scientists (Physics, Chemistry and Maths) were unanimous in their rejection of the idea. Film and Media students on the other hand were equally emphatic in their belief that 'yes' the teaching was politically biased, that this bias was left-wing, and that 'no' they did not object.



Overseas Students

Overseas students on the whole responded positively when questioned on the friendliness of Stirling's students. Over two thirds answered that most of their friends came from Britain. A healthy 64% of foreign students also thought Stirling students to be friendly, although nearly a third thought the University population 'unfriendly'.



Day to Day

The purpose of the day to day section of the probe was to get some kind of general impression of the everyday rigmarole of student life. The figures make for interesting reading (honest).

Asked about their eating habits, 78% of those who responded to the probe said they were meat-eaters while 19% said they were vegetarians and 3% vegans. There was a correlation between those who refuse meat and those who refuse to vote for a political party; 42% said they wouldn't vote if there was a general election tomorrow. Among those who would, 29% said they would vote Labour while only 3% said

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Continued.

they would vote Conservative (surprise, surprise.) Respondents who said they ate occasionally at the MacRobert or Gannochy amounted to 64% with 20% saying they never ate at either one and 16% saying that they did so more than four times a week (eat at the MacBob or Gannochy that is.)

On to sleeping habits. Apparently 42% of those who responded sleep naked while with 36% it varies (according to climate presumably?) 20% said they never sleep without clothes of some description and good for them. One modest soul wouldn't tell and two others told a little too much (turn to page 24.)

Which leads us into money matters. Most of those who replied said they could live within their means - 65.2% as opposed to 34.8% who said they couldn't; 51.4%, however, said they didn't live within their means while 45.1% said they did (spot the fine semantic distinction.)

Asked if they were a regular tobacco smoker, 72% of respondents said no while 28% said yes. On average, those people who replied yes generally consumed the equivalent of 18 cigarettes a day, the highest number being 50 a day and the lowest, 3.

Switching to ecclesiastic mode (proving there's more to life than a pair of Levi 501s) 27% of those who replied considered themselves religious while 66% said they couldn't possibly be because etc etc and 6% said they didn't know because etc etc.

Where the inn places begin ... Asked which pubs they drank in most (and faced with loads of impossible choices) respondents came up with the following results. The Meadowpark proved the most popular place to be seen in with 47% of those who replied giving it le thumbs up, the 'Grange proved a close second with 43%, followed by the Gannochy with 27%, the Queen's with 8% and the MacRobert bar with 7%. 22% said they drank at pubs not included in the list. The frequency with which students go out for a drink during semester varied from the 10% of respondents who said they were out very night to the 4% who said they never went out (who are these people?) 45% of those who responded said they went out 1/2 times per week, while 32% said 3/4 times, and 10% said about twice a month.

Turning now to the media. It is interesting here to note that of those who responded, more think the BBC trustworthy than they do independent television and radio: 32% as opposed to 20%. It would appear from this that despite the fact that the BBC has radically altered its programme style, in recent years, to something more akin to that of commercial broadcasting, it has retained its traditional image of orthodoxy; old prejudices die hard, with the commercial channels being tarred with the brush of being commercial and, therefore, by extension, unreliable (although Channel Four has managed some level of respectability with 29% thinking it trustworthy).

Not surprisingly, of all the media it was the 'quality' press which was considered most trustworthy (which is a laugh for a start) with 59%; and 12% of those who

responded thought the tabloid press were reliable. Those who thought none of the media were reliable came to 32%.

A quick look at what publications respondents think the best read, reveals THE GUARDIAN is the most popular 'quality' paper at 20%, THE ECONOMIST, the most popular magazine at 7% and THE SUN, THE DAILY MAIL and THE SOCIALIST WORKER, the most popular tabloids at 2% each. Now there are some names to conjure with. BRIG, that renowned 'quality' yearly, received 1% - the same as THE OBSERVER, SUNDAY TIMES and SUNDAY TELEGRAPH. The recently FACE-lifted NATIONAL STUDENT seems to be getting through to people in some respects. 67% of respondents said they always picked up a copy while 12% said they actually read it as well. 19% said they'd never heard of it.

There was some confusion over membership of SUSAs. Of those who responded, 12% didn't know if they were or not, 15% said no they weren't, while 74% realised there was no getting out of it and yes they were. (And why should they want to get out of it anyway?) 41% said they were members of the Sports Union, 53% said they weren't and 6% didn't know. As far as membership of the NUS goes, 75% said they were members, 16% said they weren't and 9% didn't know. It is clear from the results that some people thought they were NUS members but were not in SUSAs; which suggests a continued confusion as to the difference between SUSAs and the Council of the Students' Association.



SUSA Stuff

Well, most of us at least know what SUSAs stands for -- 81% to be precise. 16% had different variations of Stirling University Students' Association. Those polled had a number of views on the worth of General Meetings. 32% felt they were about 'hacks trying to justify themselves' -- this was the most popular verdict. Equally weighted at 20% were the comments 'boring' and 'fundamental', and 14% felt that at least General Meetings were 'good for a laugh'.

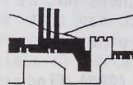
When it comes to the activities of SUSAs, it must be said that feelings were mixed. 44% of replies were adverse. The most popular remark in this category was that SUSAs does nothing much and is pretty inept. Other remarks mentioned were; 'wasting money', 'being cliquish' and 'boosting hacks' careers and egos. A sober 30% kept their replies factual and neutral though only 17% of replies were what one might call favourable. All in all, one can conclude that there is room for improvement.



Brig

The BRIG Section was not intended as a set of Trick questions, and on the whole the answers were positive. 52% of respondents felt BRIG interested them often, 41% seldom, and 7% penned a 'never'. When these figures were then correlated to major degree subject, it was found that Arts students tended to find the magazine generally interesting whereas Science and Social-Science students congregated around the 'seldom' category. On the subject of

BRIG's positive and negative points, the most often commended features were its lay-out, overall range of articles, and in particular the What's On. The less than enthusiastic replies tended to focus on dozens of relatively small points individual to respondents, though a significant minority felt BRIG should 'de-politicise' itself. The improvements people would make to BRIG produced more interesting replies. For some, it should contain more student photography and be both funnier and more satirical. Others urged it to be 'less arty', 'less posy and pretentious', more cynical, and several people even felt it should broach the subject of 'student nudity'. As an interesting possibility for any future BRIG editor, a number of considered replies thought that there should be more science articles under the auspices of a science editor. When, as a final point, people were asked to describe why (and if) they liked BRIG, the commonest reply was that it was 'free', though one person thought that they had in their hands 'a charmingly aesthetic piece of modern literature'.



Outside World

In the 'Outside World' section, nearly 80% of replies confessed to having used the Careers Service only once or never -- possibly the remaining 20% who said that they had used the service for job information are nearing the end of their degree programme. Nevertheless, most respondents considered their job prospects as favourable, with 53% of people answering 'yes' to the possibility of finding a job with job satisfaction: 23%, it seems, 'don't know' what lies ahead of them after university. On the subject of academic work, around 50% of those replying considered non-academic life as being more important to them than their studies, with 39% considering the two as equally important. Only 10% implied that their work took precedent.

61% of the replies thought that more non-students should become involved in university life, whilst the students and staff already here leave Stirling on average somewhere between once a week and once a month.

When asked whether or not they would define themselves as a member of a social class, 54% answered in the affirmative. A significant 35% refused all class definitions. Of those who did define themselves, over half considered themselves as 'middle class', 34% 'working class' and 12% 'upper class'. Interestingly, around a half of the working class considered this definition as important to their daily lives. Only a quarter of the middle class and an insignificant 10% of the upper class thought their self-definition as being important.

Are you indecisive? 53% of those polled are not, 22% are and around one quarter definitely, decisively do not know either way.

The conception, design, collection, compilation, correlation, writing and presentation of the BRIG PROBE was done by the extremely active BRIG team...