

Failure of Canadian universities to meet Canadian needs

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OTTAWA — When the National Museum of Man needed qualified researchers to study Canadian folklore, the museum turned to scholars from the United States, Ireland and Israel because no trained Canadians could be found.

Because of a shortage of training programs in Canada, nine of the 15 interpreters for Parliament are non-Canadians. Four of the six Canadian interpreters were trained in Switzerland, Argentina, Great Britain and the United States.

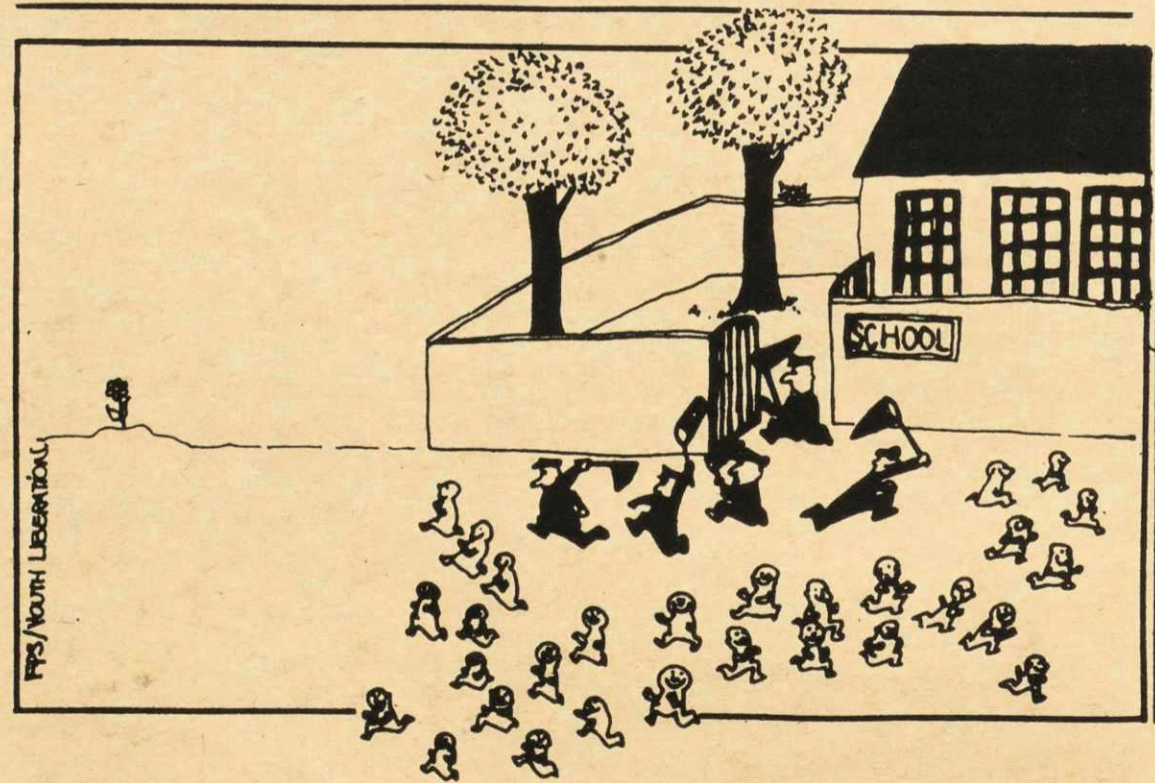
Applicants to Canadian law schools must take an admissions test written and administered in the United States.

These and other examples of the apparent failure of Canada's post-secondary education institutions to meet Canadian needs were documented yesterday in a report on Canadian studies written for the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada.

The report by Professor Thomas Symons, the AUCC's commissioner of Canadian studies, concludes that Canada's universities and colleges have neglected Canadian content in curriculum, because of "indifference or even antipathy" and have failed in many instances to train Canadians to deal with uniquely Canadian problems in the sciences, professions and arts.

Prof. Symons, the former president of Trent University of Peterborough, documents the wholesale importation of foreign faculty which occurred during the rapid expansion of Canadian universities in the 1960s.

YOU CANNOT ORGANIZE SUCCESSFULLY WITHOUT EDUCATING



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For example, about 40 per cent of the economics professors of Canadian universities maintain foreign citizenship. About 46 per cent of geography professors are non-Canadian. About 35 per cent of political science professors are non-Canadian. About 60 per cent of anthropology professors are non-Canadian.

Some U.S. sociologists on Canadian faculties "were even forthright enough to tell the commission that they would not hire Canadians ... because 'once one hires a few then they will be pushing for more and more'."



These large percentages of foreign faculty undoubtedly contribute to the lack of Canadian content in curriculum, Prof. Symons says. But he rejects the demands of many young Canadian faculty members to set quotas on course content.

Prof. Symons, who is also chairman of the Ontario Human Rights Commission, says content quotas are unworkable.

In his 350-page report, titled To Know Ourselves, Prof. Symons also rejects arguments that knowledge knows no nationality and Canadian content in academic studies, particularly the

sciences, is irrelevant.

Such arguments are intellectual snobbery, he says.

"There are few other countries in the world with a developed post-secondary educational system that pay so little attention to the study of their own culture, problems and circumstances in the university curriculum," the report says.

However, Prof. Symons told reporters he is optimistic that this situation will change, largely because of public pressure that was made evident by the more than 1,000 briefs and 30,000 letters received by the commission.

Industry and government in some cases have shown a greater acceptance of the principle of Canadian studies than the academic community, he said.

The report says, "Many scholars and administrators at Canadian universities have adopted, or accepted, the attitude that Canada is not a sufficiently interesting subject for study and research. Going further than this, some obviously feel that Canadian problems, events and circumstances are, almost by definition, of only second-rate importance."

But throughout the report and during questioning at a news conference yesterday, Prof. Symons refused to single out specific individuals or institutions.

"I don't think it would be helpful," he said.

In many instances there is a relationship between the high percentage of non-Canadian faculty and the lack of interest in Canadian studies, he said.

But Prof. Symons refused to say whether the next volume of his report, which deals with staffing questions, will recommend hiring quotas. The volume should be released later this year.

The report, the result of three years of work by Prof. Symons and 15 researchers, describes failings and makes recommendations in virtually every academic discipline and field of study.

In hearings and briefs, the commission was told repeatedly that foreign dominance of faculty has resulted in an unsympathetic or even contemptuous attitude toward Canadian studies.

"The commission concluded that substantial grounds for complaints of this nature existed and continue to exist. In some cases they are the product of accidental circumstances, but in others Canadian studies have been deliberately ignored or restricted."

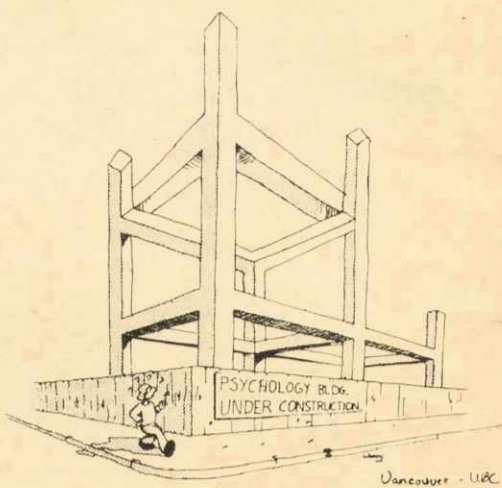
Only 8 per cent of the English courses in universities deal with Canadian literature in any substantial way despite keen student interest, the report says. "The commission is prepared to argue that there is now a substantial body of Canadian literature that merits such study for its own sake."

At the postgraduate level some "long-established universities seem to have made it a point of honor to avoid offering courses" in Canadian literature.

Investigations by the commission revealed that graduate students and young faculty were frequently discouraged "or even warned away" from the field of Canadian literature because it "would be detrimental" to their prospects for advancement within the profession.

Universities have shown inadequate attention to resource and agricultural economics research and teaching despite their importance to Canada the report says. For example no university offers a grain-marketing course "in spite of the significance of wheat and other grains to the Canadian economy."

Although Canada has the second-largest land mass of any nation "geography appears to be a neglected discipline at a surprising number of Canadian universities."



Less than 25 per cent of the geography courses offered at Canadian universities deal with Canadian geography the report says. "At several universities more intensive study is devoted to the geography of areas of Africa, Europe and Central and South America."

The latest edition of the National Atlas of Canada depends on census information that is 14 years out of date because the federal Government didn't provide adequate resources to bring the volume up to date.

Many historical Canadian maps have fallen into the hands of foreign collectors.

Only 20 per cent of the history courses at universities deal with Canadian history, although 34 per cent of students take Canadian history courses. This "suggests that in this field, as in many other, student interest (in Canadian studies) is well ahead of the course structure."

High school and university students have a woeful lack of knowledge about Canada's political system, the report says. Professors complained that many students didn't know the distinction between Canada's parliamentary system and the U.S. congressional system, or between a state governor in the United States and a provincial lieutenant-governor.

About 28 per cent of the undergraduate courses offered by university political science departments are Canada-oriented.

No academic book has ever been written about the Liberal Party.

Sociology and anthropology departments are dominated by foreign faculty, the report says. "No doubt both academic snobbery and the old-boy

network played a part."

The problem is compounded because most of the Canadian sociology and anthropology professors received their post-graduate training at foreign universities.

The U.S. domination of sociology programs has produced "incongruous and even absurd" results, such as courses on race relations and cultural pluralism ignoring French-English relations, Canadian multiculturalism and native peoples while analyzing race and ethnic relations in the United States.

"There is, indeed, a real danger that sociology, and perhaps to a lesser extent anthropology, as fields of scholarship in Canada will become so oriented to American interests, values, methodologies and research priorities that they can no longer serve the academic and social interests of this country."

No Canadian has ever written a textbook in the field of international relations for Canadian university students, the report says.

Inadequate Canadian research in this field has caused Canadian diplomats to rely on U.S. technical data at such international conferences as on the Law of the Sea.

Although Canada is officially a bilingual country, "there is an acute shortage of skilled Canadians in both interpretation and translation. Consequently, it has been necessary for some item either to hire non-Canadians for positions in these fields or to depend upon international schools, principally in Europe, for the training of Canadians."

Graduates of universities and colleges should be

able to understand both of Canada's official languages and "have some ability to converse in the second language," the report says. Institutions of higher education should set this as a basic objective and it should be supported with more money from the federal and provincial governments.

Universities should reintroduce proficiency in a second language as a requirement for a postgraduate degree.

In the area of the performing arts there has been a tendency at some universities to insert merely a token Canadian play, opera or ballet in courses.

There is very little published material about the performing arts in Canada. "For example, not one Canadian musical, not even Anne of Green Gables, is available in print."

Although there may not be a Canadian school of philosophic thought, a substantial number of Canadian works in philosophical literature exist. "Sometimes unfortunately, it appears to be better known and more highly regarded abroad than it is at home."

About 40 per cent of philosophy professors are non-Canadians. "However, other factors have also clearly contributed to the neglect of Canadian studies in philosophy, including the simple ones of academic snobbery, reluctance to deal with the obvious and deference to the priorities of prestigious scholars in large metropolitan societies."

The commission's research was financed with a \$250,000 Canada Council grant and several smaller private grants.

Restoring the universities in Canada

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by Joan Davies

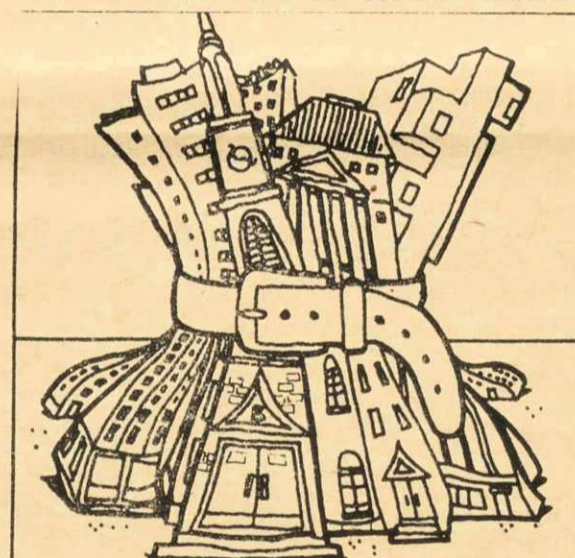
The problem of the universities is not that they do not have enough money, but that the conditions under which they receive the money make it difficult for them to plan seriously, and that their attempts at meeting the criticisms of governments and newspapers lead them deeper into a financial morass. Economists' predictions of the ratio of job-specialties to university qualifications have been shown over the past decade to have been invariably miscalculated. Liberal educationists have been equally wrong in their perception of what the great mass want or need. The continuing university crisis is at least partly due to the unholy alliance of educationalists and market economists who have conspired to influence governments that everyone should go to the university and that all the courses should be geared to the market demands or to the 'psychological' needs of students.

If "relevance" was the keynote of the 1960s, it soon became apparent in the 1970s that this meant "jobs", in spite of the metaphysical prognostications of Herbert Marcuse and Mario Savio. If we use radical analysis in the context of a capitalist market economy, there is no doubt that the radical stance will be used by the capitalists for their own ends. The language of Ivan Illich became a stick to beat the universities into submission. The argument went: "If the students really believe that the universities are irrelevant for contemporary society, and if they are as elitist as they say, then let's open wide the curriculum so that everything 'relevant' is admitted, and relax the entrance regulations so that everyone can gain admission. Then we will be able to introduce the market mechanism so that knowledge becomes entirely subservient to the needs of the market economy. Clark Kerr and Tom Hayden can sit round the same table and capitalism will, once more, have been saved."

The effect of this thinking was to swamp the universities with students who were incapable of coping, in spite of open curricula, and who shrewdly, realised that unless they trained for specific occupations, they would be permanently unemployed. Universities therefore spawned large departments of business administration, law, social work, counselling, and relegated those exciting courses on Zen Buddhism and Marxist Deviance to side-shows in the great game of economic life.

Some societies (such as the USA) were caught up in the trap of relating entrance requirements to sectoral aspirations. To attract Black, Puerto Rican or Indian students (not to speak of women), courses and programmes were offered on the

relevant thematic issues, and financial incentives and quotas were established which were meant to enslave the minorities in the system. The effect of this on the one side was to accentuate the social differences: Black is beautiful, Chicano is beautiful, Women are beautiful, and so on. (To attend an American Learned Society meeting is to witness the fragmentation of knowledge at its worst: at one such that I recently attended there were no fewer than 40 sectoral caucuses,



including 6 Black and 5 women's groups.) On the other side, in the absence of any other integrating mechanism, the constraints of the market began to dominate the rationale of knowledge. Black students sought to explore the black experience in industry, education, politics and sport. The terms they used were those used by any one who was part of the system. The major difference was that their stance defied and defeated the system without offering an alternative. To be apart from the system was to be part of its essentials.

In the January-February issue of *Society* a series of US educationalists debate the implications of accountability and of catering to the social segments. The message is frightening. Liberalism without the theoretical core provides nothing more than job and curricula trade-offs. The university becomes a microcosm of the market-place and a battlefield of government-racial disputes. Quality, knowledge and ideas are in second place behind the evident need to cater to the requirements of the clientele who define knowledge largely in terms of fragmentary demands. Nobody wins because in such a free-for-all there is no basis for satisfaction.

This may seem a strange time for such a harangue, when the Ontario government has voted a thumping 14.4 per cent increase in

university financing for 1976-77. But it will not happen again, and the universities had better realize it while they rake in the money. Some years ago C.B. Macpherson argued that what we need is not the "liberal but the critical university." By opting for liberalism (which all governments supported) the universities abdicated their claim to be critical. The market mechanism was never a good judge of quality. By abdicating to it, the universities have placed themselves in the increasingly dangerous position of being ruled by the division-of-labour that characterizes the rest of society.

The problem now is to recognize that the universities have a year of grace to get their house in order, not only in Ontario but throughout Canada. This requires:

- i That they press for an abandonment of formula financing in favour of block grants on a 3- or 4- or 5-year period in which the sense of market control is absent, or at least seriously reduced. (Then, perhaps, we can begin again to talk about 'students' instead of BIUs, and teachers or professors instead of FTEs.)
- ii That they re-introduce entrance requirements for university admission (they need not be concerned about the ghost of the old tests: at least we have learned much about testing in the last decade).
- iii Consequently that they aim to reduce, not increase, the number of students.
- iv That they vastly improve their adult education programmes which recognize that knowledge, not degrees, is what the mission of the university is about. (They might take another look at the Workers' Educational Association in Britain, the Adult Education Programmes in Denmark, Germany and Poland, and, nearer home, the Departments of Extension at Memorial and St. Francis Xavier Universities.)
- v They might begin to recognize that universities do not create anything, but that without them we would have no plays, novels or music, that the greatest volume of research is conducted by governments, but that the most effective research is done in universities.

The problem of the past decade is that rather than having been asked to take a look at their own practices, the universities have been asked instead to take a look at social deficiencies outside and to cope with them. Rather than dealing with social inequalities in economic life, governments found it convenient to dump their social incompetencies on universities, and the professors (God bless them) were only too willing to save their guilty consciences and oblige. Now that the honeymoon is over, the universities might settle down to working out a financial arrangement with governments which allows teachers to teach and governments to govern.