

Clark

Is Alberta's teacher shortage almost over? How will this affect new graduates in education?

Mr. Clark agreed that in many areas, shortages were disappearing. However he cited vocational education and far-northern teaching in general as areas where a definite shortage of personnel still exists. He could not say whether or not out-of-province teachers would be less sought after in future than Alberta teaching graduates, as the decisions on hiring are made by individual school boards, but he did say, "If a graduate from an Alberta university is willing to go anywhere in the province to teach, today I could not see that he would not be able to get a job."

What are the government's plans with respect to U of A expansion?

The minister saw three possibilities. (1) Let the U of A grow as large as it wants, (2) set a quota higher than the present one and build a fourth campus when that new quota is exceeded, or (3) create a new type of institution which would offer one, two, or three years of a graduate program, after which post-graduate work could be done at one of the present universities.

"Frankly, I don't think the people of Alberta can afford a fourth [complete] campus, not because of the cost of graduate programs, but because of the cost of post-graduate work." He added, "I don't know which one we will choose, but we will have to have our decision within the next year."

Do you approve of having two students on the Board of Governors?

"Certainly we do, or we wouldn't be proposing legislation to make this representation mandatory. We are legislating for two representatives, but whether or not it continues to work depends on all the people involved, how sincere and genuine they are."

Evidently, the proposed legislation will continue the tradition of having the representatives appointed by Students' Council, thus preventing hopes of having elected student members on the board.

Do you think the university president should be elected or should he still be appointed by the Board of Governors?

"Well, it's an unwritten rule that you don't meddle in someone else's jurisdiction, but let me say I am extremely pleased to see that students are playing a part in the present selection. This shows very forward thinking on the part of the university. I think Dr. Johns deserves a great deal of credit for what I consider a very healthy attitude at the U of A."

Mr. Clark lamented the impression which the news media creates of our universities. He realized that the papers only print what the public buys, but he regretted that the actions of a small group of "less traditional" students characterized the entire university for the public.

"The papers never reported," he said, "that at songfest, Dr. Johns received three standing ovations from a packed Jubilee Auditorium. It wouldn't have been a bad thing if old 'Doc' Johns had received more credit than he sometimes has."

He noted, sadly, that a great deal of his mail is from persons very concerned about the unrest on our campuses.

What did you think of MLA Lea Leavitt's denouncement of student militants in the universities?

Mr. Clark felt the press had unintentionally over-emphasized certain parts of Mr. Leavitt's speech simply because they were of current interest. Apart from that, he would (understandably) make no

further comment except to say, "I've certainly given no thought to cutting off student loans or barring 'militants' (however, you define that) from public service employment."

Do you think bi-lingualism will come to Alberta as a result of the federal languages bill?

"I was at the constitutional conference, and I know first hand that as far as Quebec is concerned, it does not want the federal languages bill. I don't know whether this is what French people in the rest of Canada want or not, but as far as the provincial government is concerned, there are no moves planned for bi-lingualization. We favor a voluntary approach to a second language."

Mr. Clark did however mention some bi-lingual concessions made in his own department. Last year the school Act was changed so that grades 9 and 12 departmental exams could be taken in French. Also, there is now a Director of French Curriculum, but plans for expanding schooling in French have been hampered by a great shortage of French teachers.

"I think the people of Alberta support the stand taken by Premier Strom and the other western premiers against the languages bill. Some people say this is because we have no concern for the problem of Quebec. This is not true, but I think too often the people in Eastern Canada have shown that they don't give a damn about what happens to Western Canada."

What does the Alberta Government plan to do with the Hall-Dennis Report on Education?

"I'm quite excited about some of the recommendations," was Mr. Clark's first reaction. He mentioned that the exact program the government planned in response to the report would be announced shortly, but that there was general agreement that this report was the most advanced document in its field to be seen in many years.

"What we have to do is to project 15 years into the future, because children in grade 6 now will need jobs then. As a result, I particularly enjoyed the report's suggestions on classifying curriculum into the humanities, environmentals, and communication."

Mr. Clark was not too optimistic about the coming of campus-type high schools. On the topic of high schools, he said "You can only move as fast as the public will allow you. For example, in Calgary, they are trying to start family life (sex) education courses, and some people are going right up the wall!" He said that the major argument against such courses was that they were the jurisdiction of the home and church, and that he agreed with this, but he seemed to think that the role of these institutions was changing, and that the state was bearing the load.

"Some people pay their taxes and say 'That's it. Now it's up to the bloody government.' This is exactly the reverse of what we in government would like to see," he said.

Finally, do you think we will see the grade 12 departmental exams replaced by a cross-Canada college entrance exam, giving students more mobility?

Mr. Clark was very doubtful we would see either of these things in the near future, because it was so easy for provincial governments to arrange their education systems in the way most convenient for them, and in the process forget all about the rest of Canada.

"A lot of governments say 'Why should we bother to change for someone on the other side of the country?', and leave it at that."

With that, the extraordinary man with the workable ideas left to attend the daily Question Period. I smiled in the gallery as he stood time after time to reply quietly and efficiently to belligerent MLA's who seemed to blame him personally for those "drug-crazed fiends" who they knew were "taking over" our high schools and universities.

