

The Gateway

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STAFF THIS ISSUE—Surviving VGW and showing up to do yeoman duty Sunday night were Rose Mah Toy, S. S. P. Bayer, Don Moren, Marion Conybeare, Ralph Melnychuk, Marg Penn, Penny Hynam, Lorraine Minich, Sheila Ballard, Peter Enns, Richard Vivone, Captain Marvel, Andy Rodger, Marcia Reed, Bruce Ferrer, Bruce Mumford and yours truly, Harvey Thomgirt.

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provincial government blunder

A provincial educational research program has been scrapped at least temporarily, and educationists are raising the first major storm of protest seen so far against Education Minister Randolph McKinnon in his 18 months in office.

It is on Randolph McKinnon's shoulders that blame must fall for the government's decision to abandon the program, considered by many to be the key to giving education in the province a new sense of direction. Earlier statements from the minister and from Premier E. C. Manning indicated that the government agrees, in principle, that research is necessary to education.

Spokesman for public education bodies now say they are baffled by the government's sudden turnabout, which has dashed previously buoyant hopes for a start on education research this year.

The government's attitude is perhaps best summed up by Mr. McKinnon's statement last week to a Calgary newspaperman: "We don't want to rush into this sort of thing." The government, he says, wants more time to study the implications of research.

Rubbish. By making its decision not to proceed with a program similar to one already operating in Ontario, the government has ignored the advice of every educational organization in the province.

For example, late last year, a special committee representing trustees, teachers, home and school organizations, department of education and the faculties of education at both Alberta university campuses, presented a brief to the government on the need for an educational studies and development council. That brief presented in some detail proposals for educational research.

But apparently the government has decided to take the easy way

out, and avoid spending time preparing legislation to set up the institute. Thursday's Throne Speech contained few, if any surprises; most of the legislation mentioned in it has been public knowledge for many months. Yet the Minister of Education claims that time ran out for the government on preparing the needed legislation, and has the timidity to suggest that a bill could not be prepared midway through the Legislative session.

And what would an educational research institute cost Albertans? Dr. H. T. Coutts, dean of education at the University of Alberta, has said an initial government grant of between \$100,000, and \$200,000 would be enough to "get things rolling," and eventually, it would cost \$1 to \$2 million to maintain such a centre.

Surely it is the department of education's role to assist educationists to do more and to do it better in the whole field of education. There is certainly little evidence here of Mr. McKinnon's department providing much leadership in education through research.

Few can argue that it is responsible for a provincial government to spend \$115 million per year on education, as Alberta's is this year, without showing any apparent concern as to the direction education is going. Not one penny is being allocated in Alberta to evaluate the current school system and find ways through research so that we may improve opportunities for all children in the province.

And educational opportunity is something which definitely must be improved in Alberta. An educational research institute would be a concrete step toward improving the educational system to the point where universal accessibility would be more than just a comfortable phrase.

a hard job well done

Varsity Guest Weekend this year was an unqualified success.

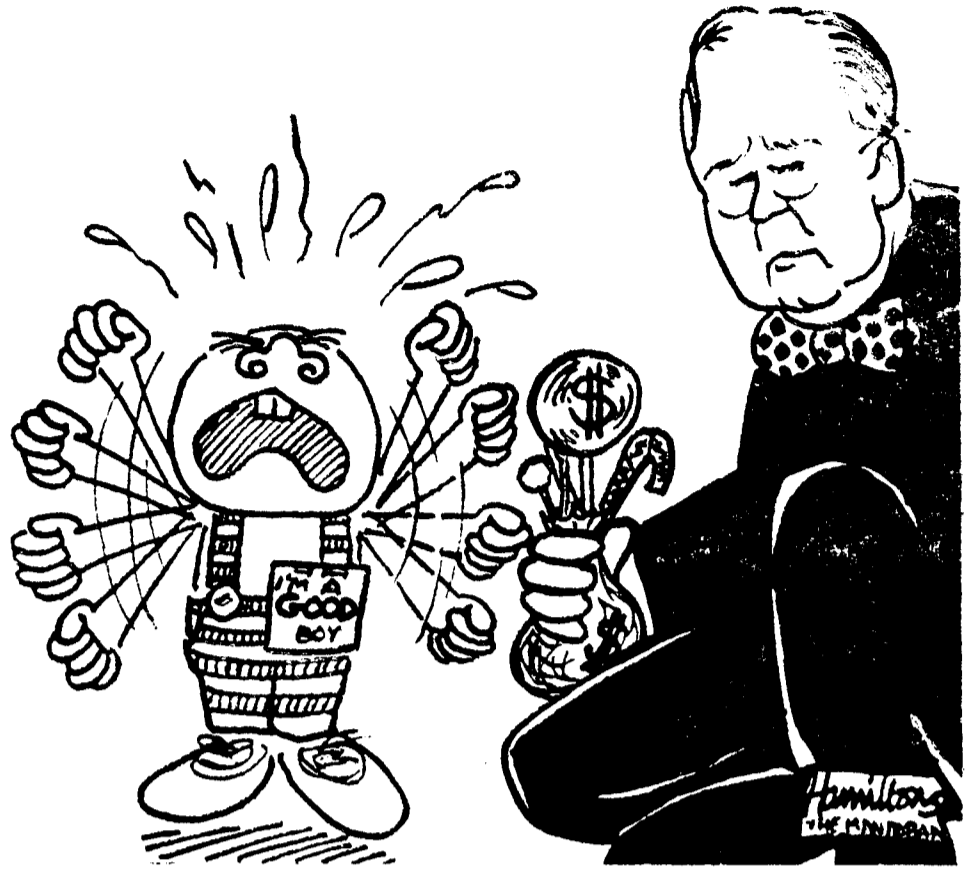
For the first time in recent years, members of the university community have made a sincere attempt to mirror themselves for the society which foots the bills for post secondary education in Alberta.

Perhaps the best example of this new approach to the annual circus formerly called VGW was Saturday's teach-in. For several hours, campus

visitors were given an opportunity to concentrate on ideas and opinions—the stuff of the university—instead of our institution's sprawling physical plant.

Mr. William Thorsell, Miss Elizabeth Kostash, Mr. Peter Boothroyd, and their band of VGW workers are to be commended for a hard job well done.

Hopefully, next year's VGW committees will equal the job which was turned in this year.



if you don't give me free education, i'll scream an' holler an' bit you in the leg an' keep you up all night an' hold my breath until i turn blue an'

David Murray explains his position

The author, David Murray, is one of two University of Alberta philosophy professors who have been embroiled for more than seven weeks in a dispute regarding their denial of tenure.

—The Editor

To The Editor:

As you know, I've preferred to say nothing in public about the denial of tenure to Prof. Williamson and myself. The discussion in your columns is, however, in danger of concealing the central issue in the case. I don't want it to vanish.

The issue is, and has always been, this: what sort of training in philosophy is the Philosophy Department to offer students? Every one of the now famous explosions in the department, last November, arose from debate over this vital question. As it happens, Williamson and I were among the majority who argued that there should be department control over our total program (as opposed to autocratic control, or to none at all), and Prof. Mardiros in the minority; but at no time did the debate descend to "personalities", emotional though it was, nor was the outcome of any debate altered by personal animosities.

Those on both sides held their opinions sincerely, and on what they took to be grounds of principle. Certainly there was no love lost between some of the parties involved, but that affected nothing. It is therefore absurd to claim that Williamson and I "disrupted" the workings of the department, much less the individual work of any colleague.

As for "the campaign of vindictiveness, vilification and slander": if Prof. Mardiros is a candidate for the title of Most Vilified Philosopher, he has strong competition from Williamson and me. To the Tenure Committee, he expressed damaging opinions of our teaching and writing, neither of which he had investigated, and he repeated them to persons inside and outside the

department and to the CBC. What kind of "silence" is this? It is a little late for Prof. Price to speak of us as "very competent"; had he insisted on this opinion two months ago, on an occasion far more apropos, much anguish might have been avoided. And he might reflect that if many persons who "have professed admiration and friendship" for Mardiros (I was one of them) have failed to "come to his defence", it is because they think he is wrong. Must friendship smother scruples?

When the news of our dismissal reached the department, astonishment and shock were almost universally felt—by Prof. Kemp, too, as he may remember. That is evidence that any "animosities" involving Williamson or me were sufficiently trivial that no one thought them possible serious grounds for sacking us.

Nor were they the original grounds; if they are serious animosities now, they have on account of the first decision. To adduce them as significant factors is mere smokescreen.

There is hardly room for honest doubt that disagreements over academic policy were the real reason for dismissal, and I think them improper reasons. It is still worse to pretend that those disagreements amounted to mere "disruptiveness", and that they were peculiar to Williamson and me alone; and staggeringly silly to claim that (for example) Williamson and I are in league with Prof. Tennessen to force our department to maintain the doctrines of some single narrow school.

We, and others, have argued that a carefully planned program is compatible with fruitful diversity of opinion, and essential to the development of students who take philosophy seriously; we presupposed the "unrestricted freedom for such discussions" to which Prof. Price nostalgically refers; and we were sacked.

David Murray,
Philosophy Department