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# Demographers were wrong

OTTAWA (CUP) — The 1980s would be the decade during which post-secondary enrollment bottomed out, the demographers predicted.

But the demographers were wrong. While the age group that traditionally has the heaviest post-secondary participation rate — 17 to 21-year olds — has narrowed considerably in the last decade, colleges and universities across the country are reporting another year of steady enrollment increases.

An informal telephone survey conducted by the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada confirms that predictions made 20 years ago are completely wrong.

"We originally saw the group of 17 to 21-year olds declining, and we expected the participation rate to be about the same," said AUCC researcher Marino Kristjanson. "Perhaps we were relying too much on connecting these two."

According to the AUCC, enrollment across Canada has increased for the seventh consecutive year. Full-time undergraduate enrollment is up by 1.3 per cent, with the largest increases — 6.3 and 4.4 per cent, respectively — reported in Newfoundland and Saskatchewan.

"We would have predicted differently," said Kristjanson. "I think we would have expected an overall decrease of at least that much."

AUCC statistics estimate there are about 414,000 full-time undergraduates enrolled in Canada's universities this year, with 255,000 part-time undergrads, 57,000 full-time graduate students, and 37,000 part-time grads.

In the 1982-83 year, statistics were 376,000, 233,000, 50,000, and 33,000, respectively.

"These are significant increases, and in a short period of time too," said Kristjanson.

Most education groups and critics say high unemployment rates are keeping many young people in school.

"What we have now is the unwilling student," said Lynn McDonald, federal New Democratic post-secondary education critic. "Enrollment is up because jobs are scarce."

Kristjanson says several factors influence enrollment changes, but agrees poor employment prospects place greater demand for higher education.

"Good jobs aren't easy to come by for young people, and so there is pressure to go to school," he said. "Full-time first year enrollment in

Alberta increased more this year than last year, which isn't surprising."

Jean Wright, an accessibility researcher for the Canadian Federa-

tion of Students, said groups that traditionally have avoided universities are now unexpectedly enrolling for post-secondary education.



## Smatterings

Randal Smathers

### WARNING:

This is a CBC bash. Cultural nationalists beware.

In an open letter published in the *Globe and Mail* (Nov. 20), a group called the "Friends of Public Broadcasting" (FOP) announced that "public broadcasting (is) essential to preserve Canada as a proud and distinctive nation." In short, without the CBC, we will become Americans.

The same document declares, "The CBC should be given responsibility for an all news and information channel." Personally I think a Canadian news channel is a great idea. It would give we Albertans another foreign point of view (Toronto's). We already get CNN from Atlanta.

However, given the fact that the CBC goes through tax dollars the way Imelda Marcos goes through her shoe budget, one has to question the intelligence of giving such a project to the CBC.

The management of the CBC under Trudeau-era political hack Pierre Juneau has been woeful. In fact, FOP attempts to distance themselves from the CBC's economic disaster. "It is not the mission of Friends of Public Broadcasting to endorse the management of the CBC."

The CBC also provides much of our news now. It would be nice to see how an independent source would cover the Canadian information scene. It is dangerous to get all of our news from the same corporate offices in Ontario.

The letter goes on to say that 50 per cent of programming "from 7:00 to 11:00 p.m. each night should be high quality Canadian shows in (drama and documentary)".

Two questions: who's going to watch this stuff, and define high quality?

If you're still not worried about these people, cast an eye upon their answers.

First, and I quote, "It is the role of public policy to ensure that broadcasting serves cultural rather than economic goals." This translates into, "Nobody will watch this, but it will employ some artsies." Second: the CRTC will determine quality Who's zoomin' who?

The same CRTC that gives monopolies to cable companies so they can make me get five US channels (CNN, A&E, The Nashville Network, The Learning Channel, and Country Music TV), and one channel from the Twilight Zone (Life Channel), just so I can see two Canuck Content stations (TSN and Much-Music)? Yep, the same CRTC. The group that held serious hearings to determine what was "Lite Rock" and what rock had the normal number of calories? The very same.

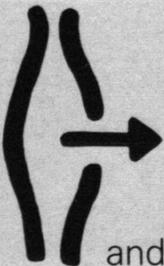
I can just imagine them having hearings on whether "The Beachcombers" is quality dramatic programming or not. Bizarre concept.

If these folks took a look at PBS in the States, they would find that it derives its quality from the fact that it is syndicated. That means if PBS Boston puts out a great program, lots of other public stations buy it. If Boston puts out dreck, they lose a bag of bucks. Also, because PBS does not buy on nationality, they have the best shows from Canada, Britain, the States, Australia and more.

It also happens that a substantial percentage of PBS's donations come from Canadians. We wouldn't have to give money to Americans for good TV if the CBC did a better job now. Giving more money to the CBC, under any pretext, is like giving diet pills to an anorexic.

When our national fabric is held together by Barbara Frump's Lite News (less filling, looks great), we have a problem indeed.

If the Canadian Back-bacon Channel is essential to our continuation as a country, if our future is determined by a TV, ours may not be a country worth saving.



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