

Canada's policies for education in review

by Loreen Lennon

"Education in Canada is good and getting better" was the conclusion reached by the recently-released OECD Examiners' reports on educational trends in Canada.

The report, an independent study by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) was compiled by five international experts over a two-year period. It was the basis for a confrontation session with Canadian authorities in Paris in Dec. '75, and will be published later this year in an edited form along with a report on the confrontation.

The Examiner's report details the developments in educational policy since 1960, inequality of educational opportunity, the possibilities of economic bias in policy making, problems associated with centralized decision-making, and the ultimate goals of education.

The original report was obtained by the Canadian Association for Adult Education in response to what it calls "the government's discouragement of public discussion of

decisions currently facing post-secondary education." Only one student organization, OFS/FEO was given advance notice of the Examination, although the Examiners had specifically asked for considerable contact with students.

Provincial organizations were never notified.

Thus, unlike work done by student organizations, this report only looks at the education itself and not the social and economic background of the system.

Of particular concern to the university student is the section dealing with tertiary education.

The Examiners found five areas of prime importance:

1) Provincial policies in higher education: It was noted that the provinces have been successful in limiting the federal role in higher education but some provincial authorities go too far in their attempts to control institutional decisions, particularly Alberta and Quebec. The Examiners also felt the idea of increased community involvement has "taken hold" and been embraced by community colleges and other non-

university institutions. Universities, however, seem to insist upon primarily serving a "national" and even global function yet the report doubted the reality of this aim.

2) Inter university co-operation It was found that increased co-operation among universities is hampered by dissatisfaction with such organizations as the AUCC (Association of Universities and Colleges). In addition, these organizations are often ignored by the relevant authority in the decision-making process. The price of the so-called "excellence" of a few institutions is at the expense of those catering to the undergrad. The report called for a clear definition of the objectives of post secondary education.

3) Financing and rationalization of universities. The present system of federal-provincial financing does not allow federal subsidies to be earmarked for higher education, rather they are co-mingled with other funds and in some way "provincialized." The unfortunate effect is that while the provinces relate to federal government financially there is not a systematic coordination of their higher education plans.

Also recommended is the financing of relevant research by federal authorities. The present strengthening of federal financial support to humanities and social sciences was emphatically approved.

The Examiners recognized the demand for greater economy and more "rationalization" as understandable during economic stringency. But they warned that "efficiency vs quality" are not helpful alternatives for universities.

4) Graduate programmes. Qualitative improvement of the teaching staffs has gone ahead

steadily. Prospects for university employment for holders of new doctorates in natural sciences is poor, humanities and social sciences are generally able to absorb more.

But as positions are filled by younger people there is a need for comprehensive research into job opportunities for the many highly qualified academics inside and outside the universities and colleges. Also the percentage of Canadian citizens who teach at universities is increasing but it is noted that in 1972-73 about 46% of the full-time students enrolled in Phd programs were not Canadian citizens.

Community College development. In praising the concept and development of community colleges the report reiterates its strengths: access to the widest group of citizens, adaptability to local and individual demands, capacity to

perform "general services" for the community. The Examiners said greater cooperation with neighboring universities and interprovincial links will improve the community colleges which already represent the most attractive educational policy achievement made in Canada.

The history of the report is that in 1974-75 its researchers undertook a study of educational policies in Canada. The federal and provincial governments prepared background reports giving the "Canadian perspective" on issues and trends. Then the 5 OECD examiners spent a month in Canada investigating the state of Canadian education with the background reports as a basis.

The final report, which is their assessment of the situation, is available at the Gateway office.

TRIUMFant McDonald fills physics chair

The chairmanship of the department of physics within the Faculty of Science will be assumed by Dr. W.J. McDonald.

Dr. McDonald's appointment, becomes effective July 1, 1976 for a five-year term.

Currently on leave from the university at the Tri-University Meson Facility (TRIUMF) in Vancouver, Dr. McDonald is regarded as one of the most productive physicists emerging from a Canadian background in recent years.

A native of Lethbridge, Dr. McDonald has been an active participant in the research program in nuclear physics at the University of Alberta and in the development of the TRIUMF project.

In 1971-72 Dr. McDonald spent a sabbatical leave at the Rutherford High Energy Laboratory in England and in 1973-74 he was acting assistant chairman of the department of physics at the University of Alberta.

Dr. McDonald, 40, is the author or co-author of 44 scientific publications.

He will succeed Dr. John T. Sample who has been appointed director of TRIUMF.

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2. Applications for re-enrolment with Advanced Standing or by Transfer from another faculty.
May 17, 1976



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