

Task Force

The effects of foreign and foreign-trained faculty on the development of Canadian education at York University

A statement of principles and objectives

EVER SINCE THE QUESTION OF "AMERICANIZATION" of Canadian universities was first raised by Carleton professors Mathews and Steele, there has been a growing controversy over this question throughout the academic community in Canada.

York University has not been immune to this controversy, and in recent months the discussion has become more intense in most sectors of the York community.

The debate, both nationally and locally at York, has to this point been centered for the most part on the question of "numbers" with opposing sides arguing over how many Canadians were in this or that department, with the figures differing widely in some cases (such as the short debate between Glen Williams of the EXCALIBUR and the chairman of the Social Science division) depending on which side was putting forth the argument.

The Task Force sees as its first duty an enquiry into the "numbers" question at York. It seems that a study in this area is both necessary and essential as a first step in placing the discussion of the general issue of "Americanization" on as firm a footing as possible. The members of the Task Force are unanimous on this point, feeling that as there should be nothing to hide on the part of any one at York, it is best to let the facts be known. Our purposes for dealing as definitively as possible with the "numbers question" are threefold:

- (1) It will provide a firm basis for further study of the general issue to take place.
- (2) It will allow future debate to take place on a factual basis, rather than on hearsay or hastily gathered and inaccurate figures.
- (3) Having dealt with the "numbers question" thoroughly, the debate over the significance of foreign faculty could then move on to more substantive issues relating to course content, hiring and firing, research and graduate studies.

At York there have been minor discussions about the question of course content, hiring practices and research, with vague references to the fact that the disproportionate number of Americans and American-trained faculty have some effect on these areas. Thus the debate seems to be widening as indeed it should; for the mere presence of a large number of foreign professors is meaningless unless it can be shown that they have some special effect (either positive or negative) on the areas mentioned above.

With this in mind, the Task Force feels that, once the question of "numbers" is dealt with in the most definitive way possible, the next logical step would be to attempt an assessment of what effect the nationality and country of training would have on the overall functioning of the university, as well as what is taught there. Specifically, the Task Force believes the following areas require further investigation:

A) The relationship between "numbers", courses and content

We want to examine this relationship in the following areas:

- i) What courses are offered which specifically focus on Canada, the Canadian experience, and Canadian problems?
- ii) What courses are offered which specifically focus on other countries; Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, United States and other Western countries, China and the Third World?
- iii) What is the country of origin and of academic training of course directors, instructors and tutorial leaders in these courses? What is the country of origin and of academic training of the authors of textbooks and all required and recommended reading in these courses? Where were the books published?

iv) What courses are offered which do not specifically focus (in terms of course descriptions in the calendar) on any particular country? What countries are in fact studied in such courses as manifested in examples used, textbooks, required and recommended reading, essays and examinations? What is the country of origin and country of academic training of course directors, instructors and tutorial leaders of such courses?

B) The relationship between "numbers" and curriculum development

A good analysis of the situation at York also entails a thorough study of the decision-making process at York, both the formal committee structure and the informal channels. If power seems to be outside of Canadian control, then to measure the possible relationships, there must also be a thorough examination of courses and their content.

C) The relationship between "numbers" and decisions regarding hiring, firing and tenure

If York is understaffed in terms of Canadian scholars, are the hiring practices involved a factor? How are decisions made as to who gets hired, who gets tenure, etc., and how does the presence of foreign scholars affect these decisions?

Again, these are some of the questions that have to be asked, and again it means an extensive search into the formal and informal decision making structures of the university.

D) The relationship between "numbers" and research and methodology

These two areas are also important to consider in attempting to measure the possible effects of a small number of Canadian professors at York. (They are grouped together solely for the purpose of keeping repetition to a minimum.) How and who decides what research is to be done, and equally important, where do the funds come from? Is research, particularly in the social sciences, aimed at Canadian institutions and problems? Are research priorities in the various departments aimed at doing original research on Canadian problems and providing much needed learning resources on Canada?

The question of methodology is critical when it comes to assessing the effects of foreign domination of an educational institution, and it may prove to be an area of much concern at York. If York is understaffed in terms of Canadian scholars, how might this influence the way students are taught to view themselves in Canadian society? When it comes to studying Canadian problems, what are the underlying assumptions of the researcher? In what context does he perceive the problem — and the solution?

These are questions of both an ideological and methodological nature, and cannot be looked at only in the context of York, but in the context of Canadian society as a whole; for the university is an integral part of our society. This area is perhaps the most important and at the same time the most sensitive of any area in our range of study, but it is doubtful that we will be able to go into depth due to a lack of both time and manpower.

E) The relationship between "numbers" and graduate training for Canadians

The last area — possible effects on Canadian students who wish to pursue an academic career — we feel would

also be an integral part of our study. This will concern mainly the graduate school at York, where again the "numbers question" should be looked into, as well as asking questions such as the following: By what processes are students accepted into the graduate programs at York, and what are the standards used to judge their qualifications for entrance? What kinds of financial assistance are open to graduate students? What are their fields of study, and how might a small number of Canadian staff affect their choice?

This area is perhaps more important than one may think at first glance, for answers to such questions will say much about the nature and development of Canadian universities.

Methodology

A first factor affecting this kind of research is the availability of information. The Task Force would hope to be able to count on the co-operation of university and department officials for up-to-date (including appointments for the 1970-71 session) information on the citizenship status of York faculty.

Given the poverty of empirical research in the various areas related to assessing the significance of numbers, a second important factor in the Task Force's work will be devising research techniques that will provide a meaningful body of data upon which assessments can be based. We feel it is indispensable that, in addition to gathering information and evaluations from university and department officials, a serious effort be made to consult undergraduate and graduate students to hear their opinion of how the nationality and country of training of teaching staff affects course content, methodology, research and their own academic interests.

To gather meaningful evidence of this kind, the Task Force envisages the necessity of designing a number of written questionnaires (where appropriate) and a set of questions for oral interviews with specific people.

Conclusion

Perhaps the most crucial factor affecting the outcome of the research outlined here and of the informed discussion it would intend to encourage is the amount of time and the number of people who can carry out the research and write a report. The important question becomes how can we do the most research possible in the amount of time available. We have set September 1970 as the target date for publication of the findings of our research. (It is already evident that it might be necessary to aim at a thorough study of the effects of "numbers" on course content etc. on a certain number of departments.)

Within the limits of the six months between now and September, the question of the amount of time becomes a question of prioritization of time and financial resources. If some people can be freed to work on this research during the summer months (either full and/or part-time) then the extent and scope of the results will correspondingly increase.

The question of a conscious prioritization of resources needs to be set over against our commitment — and that of other interested bodies at York — to provide a serious basis for informed discussion and for taking appropriate measures to deal with what many agree is the most critical problem facing York — and all universities in Canada — in the coming years.

On Feb. 25, the Council of the York Student Federation commissioned a task force of York students to investigate the extent and effects of Americanization at York. It has already started work and will make its report to CYSF in September. The members of the task force are: Bob Roth, Francis Gregory, Greg Beadling, Terry Sulyma, John Huot and Andy Stanley. Their office is Room S618 in the Ministry of Love. Phone is 635-3267. What is reprinted here is their brief to CYSF.