

Ethnicity and pluralism in Canada

by Neal Watson

"Racism and bigotry are as much part of Canadian life as the maple leaf," according to Edmonton Journal Editor Stephen Hume.

"They are structural elements of Canadian society," he says.

Hume recently participated in a panel discussion examining ethnicity and pluralism in Canada as part of the U of A hosted *Canada, the World and the Future Conference*.

The annual conference - in its 2nd year - was held during Reading Week and attracted prominent speakers from the academic world.

Hume and the other speakers - including University Chancellor Peter Savryn - deplored the extent of bigotry and racism in Canada and criticized the federal government's multiculturalism policies.

Discrimination was "institutionalized" in Canada by people fleeing persecution - evidence of Canada's "social schizophrenia," according to Hume.

Hume provided a brief historical record of discrimination faced by minority groups in Canada - the Chinese in BC - and recounted the experiences of his father - newly emigrated from England - in attempting to fight discrimination and find employment.

As an example of the continuing threat of bigotry and anti-Semitism in Canada, Editor Hume pointed to the Jim Keegstra episode in which the former mayor of Eckville taught his students the Holocaust was exaggerated and the result of an international Jewish conspiracy.

Hume charged the "voices (of protest) from this University were

small indeed" during the Keegstra affair.

"Too often we are complacent in our comfortable majority," Hume commented.

Despite Canada's poor record in dealing with minority groups, Hume is "optimistic" and believes there is a "process at work."

"A growing number of Canadians are becoming educated about flaws in our national character," he says.

Because of this growing awareness, Canadians are exerting pressure on opinion leaders and formal instruments are being created to combat racism and prejudice.

After Hume sketched out his "history" the other speakers turned their attention to gov't policy in the area.

Criticizing the federal gov't's multiculturalism policy, University Chancellor Peter Savryn says there is not adequate legislative or financial support to make the policy of success.

Savryn says multiculturalism needs definition and supporting legislation.

He says top political leaders only pay "lip-service" to the concept.

There is a detrimental emphasis on the two founding nations in Canada to the exclusion of all others, Savryn charged.

"Multiculturalism is a tremendous dream," Savryn concluded, "but can only be a reality with support."

"In our society, what we are looking for is justice for all members," says Dr. Jamshed Mavalwala, an Anthropology professor from the University of Toronto.

Canada's multiculturalism is "well-meaning, but a stupidly put-together idea," he says.

Mavalwala agreed with Stephen Hume's account of Canadian attitudes and pointed to our educational material which, he said, is riddled with stereotypes.

He charged Canadians with an "attitude of complacency" and

said in Canada we point to injustice in other countries (the caste system in India) and use "comparison as a defense."

Mavalwala urged Canadians not to be satisfied with inequities of the past because Canada has the

"opportunity to build a truly multinational society."

Overall, the speakers agreed that, despite past injustice in Canada, the opportunity to improve attitudes and build a multicultural society.

Job training versus education: A dilemma?

by Neal Watson

"There is a genuine tension between functions of the University - to further frontiers of learning or educate to the best minds" contends University VP Research Gordon Kaplan.

Kaplan - appearing for University President Myer Horowitz - was speaking on the topic *Job-Training vs. Education: A Dilemma* during last week's *Canada, The World and The Future Conference* held on campus.

According to Kaplan, with the passage of time, the educative function of the University has been stressed over the vocational.

The result has seen universities failing to produce graduates whose skills are required by industry.

Communication between universities and industry is essential, Kaplan stressed.

This need is intensified in an era of high-technology where the training and retraining of workers is a continuous process.

This point was strongly made by Professor James Gallagher of the University's Department of Industrial and Vocational Education.

Although Canada's labour force is one of the most educated

in the world, our performance is very poor in preparation for occupations we need, said Gallagher.

According to Gallagher, Canada ranks third internationally in terms of the education level of our labour force, but 14th overall in availability of skilled manpower.

Gallagher pointed to the "computer revolution" (1945-1990) and structural alterations in the workplace - for example, the number of women working has risen significantly - as evidence of the need for the function's of the University to be more clearly defined.

"Education has never defined what it is," said Gallagher.

The job-training aspect of education is historically in a better position to defend itself, he said.

Gallagher stressed that if Canada is to remain industrially competitive, it is essential that we adopt high technology as quickly as possible or risk losing our share of the export market.

As Gallagher says the "number of jobs lost to international competition is far greater than jobs lost to technology."

Educational institutions have a fundamental role to play in the

training and re-training of people to fill jobs in the high-tech world.

"Retraining is not a question of if," says Gallagher, "but how often and extensively."

To illustrate the necessity of retraining, Gallagher said that the productive work-life of an Engineer is seven years before they must be retrained.

Gallagher also said the number of doctorates awarded in applied sciences and engineering is declining.

Speaking for industry, Allan Gallant, the chairman of the Human Resources Committee of the Canadian Petroleum Association said the so-called job-training-education dilemma presents "an opportunity."

Gallant said it is a misconception that the private sector focuses on job-training and stressed the benefit of the liberal-arts education.

"Society is best served in letting students have the freedom to choose."

Like the other speakers, Gallant stressed the necessity of continued education and training of workers.

He also said it is vital that industry, gov't and education communicate to define needs.



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