

### Towards detection of cancer

Some forms of cancer are being detected by an entirely new method with the use of an electronic catalasemeter at the Centre de recherches des sciences appliquées de l'alimentation (CRESALA) at the University of Quebec at Montreal.

The device measures the rate of catalase in a human organism. The catalase is a universal enzyme whose presence or absence may indicate an infection or pathological condition. It is, for example, normally absent from the urine and, consequently, many urinary infections have been discovered by the use of the catalasemeter.

In some cases, the machine can also detect, in less than 20 seconds, the presence or absence of cancerous cells in a human, by analyzing drops of blood (the level of catalase normally contained in the blood drops drastically in the case of an active internal cancer).

A United States patent was obtained last April by CRESALA scientists who, in co-operation with specialists at the Hôtel-Dieu Hospital in Montreal, are carrying out their experiments. According to CRESALA, the discoveries so far are most encouraging.

### Standards of written English studied

Standards of written English among undergraduate students at Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario, is the chief topic of a recent study by Queen's professor Colin J. Norman.

Funded by a \$6,000-grant from the Ontario Universities Program for Instructional Development, and assisted by the participation of Queen's staff and students, Dr. Norman compiled the 106-page report entitled *The Queen's English* on the basis of results from testing 800 undergraduates at Queen's in 1975-76. Final examination papers at the first, third and fourth year levels from various disciplines in the Faculty of Arts and Science were graded for "style, organization and other indications of writing ability", by Dr. Norman, his assistant Stella Wynne-Edwards and in a number of cases by 16 English professors.

Among first-year students in 1975-76, according to the report, some 500 or

34 per cent wrote either badly or poorly; another 37.2 per cent wrote less than adequately but had the potential for improvement.

### Students' opinion

To round out the picture, Dr. Norman circulated questionnaires to first-year students and faculty members at Queen's. Of the 416 students who replied, more than half of them felt that at the secondary school level, they had been inadequately prepared for the standards of writing required in first-year Queen's courses. Students complained about little or no training in grammar and composition, lack of long written assignments in Grade 13 and failure of teachers to mark exercises constructively. Faculty responses to questionnaires also indicated substantial concern about the deficiencies of first-year students in terms of ability to read with intelligence and understanding, and their general level of education. The statement is made that "university standards and requirements for writing do come as a shock to many students".

Dr. Norman compares Grade 13 English marks of first-year students to their writing performance in Queen's examinations; first year Queen's students averaging about 80 per cent in Grade 13 English averaged only 67 per cent when their writing was evaluated at Queen's.

Professor Norman's study of the writing of students graduating in four-year honours programs, who comprise more than half those graduating, provide "cause for satisfaction"; results indicated that almost 75 per cent of these students write well or reasonably well. For this group the performance was judged "impressive, and probably as good or better than ever".

However, the results reported for students graduating from the three-year general programs were "disturbing". Virtually half of these students are reported to write either badly or poorly and an additional 14 per cent write less than satisfactorily.

### Remedies

Professor Norman has suggested for consideration by the Faculty of Arts and Science a number of possible remedies for these problems. These include Queen's taking an active lead

in bringing problems of literacy to the attention of the high schools, elementary schools and the Ministry of Education, screening applicants for admission, mounting a more ambitious program in remedial English, providing more help within the framework of existing university courses, and raising the minimum academic standards for the three-year general degree.

Professor Norman says, "the basic purpose of this investigation is to encourage informed and lively debate within the academic community at Queen's".

### Canada elected to United Nations Human Rights Committee

Canadian professor Walter S. Tarnopolsky was elected to the United Nations Human Rights Committee on September 20. He will serve an initial term of four years.

The committee, composed of 18 experts on human rights, is established under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Canada acceded on May 19, and which came into force on March 23, 1976. Its main purpose is to review reports from states party "on the measures they have adopted which give effect to the rights recognized therein and on the progress made in the enjoyment of those rights". Elections took place at the headquarters in New York at a meeting of the 37 countries which are now parties to the International Covenant.

A native of Gronlid, Saskatchewan, Professor Tarnopolsky is a graduate of the University of Saskatchewan, Columbia University and the University of London, and has taught law at Saskatchewan, Ottawa, Windsor and the Osgoode Hall Law School. From 1972 to 1975 he was Vice-President (Academic) at York University, Toronto, and for the past year has been Visiting Professor of Law at Laval University. He has now returned to the Osgoode Hall Law School, York University, as Professor of Law.

The author of numerous articles on human and civil rights and a widely-known book *The Canadian Bill of Rights*, Professor Tarnopolsky is a scholar of international standing in human rights.