

# Research —

## is it tied to nationhood?

By MARILYN SMITH

York's attention to the acceptance of research funds from foreign military sources is only the tip of the iceberg.

Current developments are leading York to take more responsibility for research policy and fund allocation.

Tradition has it that scientific investigation and its support are matters determined by the individual scientist. If he or she works within York then they are subject to York research policy. Scientists ensconced in the universities jealously defend their academic freedom and independence to research what they want how they want.

But developments in the form of governmental reports and investigations are tossing aside this tradition. New research policies are to be guided by national purposes.

Federal Senator Lamontagne's Special Committee on Science Policy states Canada's research efforts are disjointed, ill-organized and non-beneficial to national purposes and development.

Lamontagne told York's academics last week "I resent criticism of the report saying it



Maurice Lamontagne

gives no place to independent, pure scientists.

"To the contrary, there is explicit recognition of basic research. Society needs basic research. Let pure scientists be completely free, provided the criteria of excellence is applied.

"What we are saying in the report is that curiosity or applied research should not become a system of government-sponsored, social security in Canada."

### The Lamontagne Report

The three-volume Lamontagne Report on past, present and future Canadian science policy recommends utilizing resources, and harnessing research results for social benefit. It will revolutionize the Canadian research scene.

Canada has fallen far behind innovative nations such as the U.S. and Japan in research and development. Too little of the Gross National Product is devoted to this field, Lamontagne said.

His report states that mission-oriented and applied research needs more attention. Pure scientific or basic research would continue to receive support but funding agencies would keep a closer eye on the productivity of scientists involved in such work.

"In the past," Lamontagne explained, "attention and solutions have meant putting more money into the system. But this is not providing the final answer, because in putting more money into the system, we find we have to put in yet still more money. And the poor are poorer and the educational and health systems are no better."

### The Wright Report

At the provincial level, the Wright Report on Post-secondary education makes a recommendation affecting research grants. Ontario provides university money based on \$1,760

per student (Basic Income Unit). For graduate students, the BIU is higher.

This grant covers both teaching and research costs. The Wright Report wants educational and research costs budgeted separately, so that true research costs can be assessed. York Research Committee chairman Kurt Danzinger states this is simply an internal reclassification, but York president David Slater predicts that the move is one step towards a cut in research funds.

Any research items related to fields other than education should be transferred to those fields and receive grants there, the report states. This effectively reduces educational spending with no guarantee of replacement sources for these "non-educational" investigations.

Slater, said, "My preference is for money at arm's length, money that's not coming from people with particular interests. Yet the fact is, not just for the military, but for others, the resources open are a by-product of their missions or interests."

The adoption of the Wright report will probably reduce both educational and research resources. Slater predicts research funds will be slashed more than education funds.

At the same time, the Lamontagne Report and other studies indicate an increase in federal research funds for applied research rather than pure investigative science. The mission oriented research aimed at national development will also receive strong support.

### York's problems

York's problem is coping with increased government control both at the federal and provincial level. Until now, Canadian universities have had no real constraint in the realm of research. The problem now is to create policies which preserve a researcher's integrity as they become more and more beholden to their research sponsors.

Fund allocation will be left more in the hands of the federal agencies and the individual universities. The Ontario government with its shifting political whims is not highly regarded by academics for its decisions in research spending.

Yet the trend to give each university a lump research sum pressures it to establish a more encompassing policy.

About one-quarter of the York faculty are under external research contract. But unlike American researchers, Canadians do not have overhead costs covered by their research grants. York pays these costs, plus the researcher's salary. Full costing in the American universities makes American researchers much more beholden to their supporters. In addition, 35 to 50 percent of all university costs are covered by these research grants. Such a situation forces the American universities into a position of dependence on research supporters. The Canadian model with the overhead costs covered by the university, puts the researcher in a position of responsibility to the university.

What place has research in the university? For most academics, the functions of research and teaching are so intertwined as to be indistinguishable. Yet while the university atmosphere is most conducive to good research with the stimulation of keen minds and work opportunities, the teaching function is the primary one.

Slater says York's approach is to "make sure the kind of research taken on is compatible with York's central educational obligations." The dilemma arises over which type of faculty is harbored at York in greatest numbers, the researcher who can't teach or the teacher who

can't do quality research. Rarely are the two found together.

With little government interjection except for financing, there has been a lag in Canadian development the Lamontagne report states. The U.S. developments in military and space development are pointed out as examples when science effort is guided by social and economic objectives. Neither have particular relevance to Canada. Social and industrial development guided by national purposes of righting disparities is what Canada needs the Lamontagne report states. Politics and science don't mix, hence the apprehension of the academics. But finances are the determining factor. And because the government is paying the research bills they are stepping into the decision-making process and giving greater support to applied research, development and innovation.

### The Funding process

Both the Canadian and Ontario governments finance research through granting organizations. The federal government makes greater use of grant organization staffed by individuals more in the know about science and research. The provincial government is less trusted by academics because it doesn't operate through buffer agencies.

Various federal granting agencies deal specifically with fund allocations for research. The National Research Council gives each university president an annual research grant equalling seven and a half percent of the university's operational costs. The Minor Research Council gave York \$50,000 for research.

Included in the NRC are the Atomic Energy Council of Canada, which distributes about \$3,000,000 a year, and the Defence Research Board, with a \$4,000,000 grant annually. The DRB is the chief supporter of pure fundamental research. Then there is the Medical Research Council, with a \$19,000,000 annual grant.

The Canada Council deals with the humanities, the social sciences and the performing arts research applications through a \$12,000,000 yearly grant. Support for the social



Kurt Danzinger

sciences comes from the Canada Council and the royal commissions. More federal resource emphasis on the social sciences is promised, but for the moment, the physical, natural and engineering sciences are stressed when it comes to grants.

These spending agencies advance their claims to the Treasury Board and this body decides on final appropriation of funds.

### Here at home

York's faculty are free to apply for external research contracts with the proviso that they accept no classified or secret research.

Senate's research committee appraises all research funds and sets policy guidelines for the administration in dispensing those

funds. Slater must approve all research projects but the committee has asked him to appoint a permanent research officer as advisor.

The new emphasis on an all-encompassing research policy will continue to occupy York's attention. Slater hinted there may be a radical shift in the pattern of research funding with new senate policies. But they won't come directly from him.

Perhaps the new policy might allow funding for student research as an integral part of the learning process. Whatever develops, the ivory tower scientist will be left no more in the academic solitude of research extraneous to the new Canadian consciousness.

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