

focus on restructuring of universities

Q. You said you don't see how the system can be improved without bringing in more money. That's really against the grain, or basis, of the commission, who are trying to restructure things and, for the same kind of money to try and improve the system. So there is a real fundamental conflict there.

A. I think if they could show how it could be done, York would be glad to take part. As long as it didn't conflict with our goals. I think everybody wants to make the best possible use of public funding. There's a lot of money coming to the universities. We don't want to waste it. The thing is, we don't think we are.

York, among the larger universities in Canada, probably gives more in terms of teaching and community service—compared to the amount of results that you can get—than any other university.

If we were, say, an average Ontario university with exactly the same students and exactly the same physical plant, we would have somewhere in the neighborhood of \$18 million more than we are getting now.

Q. There seems to be a hidden assumption that the universities are wasting a lot of money, or are inefficient, or behind the times. Where do these perceptions come from?

A. I don't know exactly.

One, they may find it attractive because of some of the restructuring that has gone on in other jurisdictions. For example, Britain and the Netherlands were two countries that have fairly recently undergone a serious restructuring; huge cutbacks.

If you take a look at some of the data, even after all that restructuring in Britain they still ended up with student-faculty ratios of 10 to one.

The student-faculty ratios in Ontario are at least 16 or 17 to one, and we're funded much more poorly.

I guess what I'm saying on the one hand I'm telling you where I think they might be looking for ideas, but I'm immediately trying to point out that the situations are incomparable.

Also there is the attraction of the industrial model. The concept of rationalization is common in the operation of industry.

"Sure there may well be things we can do to make it even better. It may very well be possible to cooperate more effectively...."

You can improve overall efficiency if you cut out certain kinds of production and concentrate your effort in particular plant locations. That's an attractive model for industry. It just doesn't happen to apply very well to universities.

But there is a sense in the universities that, by and large, they are using public funds very well.

Sure there may well be things we can do to make it even better. It may very well be possible to cooperate more effectively among the universities in some areas. That's why we say at the beginning (of the brief) that if there is a way that we really can help we would be glad to do it.

There have been instances of that happening before. For example, the inter-university mail system; a cooperative effort which works well.

Perhaps of greater consequence has been the attempts to regulate the introduction and continuance of graduate programs which is a program which involves the Ontario Council of Graduate Studies and the Ontario Council of University Affairs. They take a look at all proposals and do assessments of existing programs. That's sometimes pretty time consuming.

Q. You talked about the Stager paper on accessibility at another point in your brief. It is a very conservative report. Is it, perhaps, a self-serving report for the commission that betrays a sort of hidden agenda that they have?

A. I don't know. I think that most of our committee thought it was a pretty conservative report too. It basically said that this is the situation with respect to accessibility: sure there is poor participation on the part of some people, for example those from poor families, and those from social groups who haven't characteristically gone to university. But that's the way it's always been so what's so surprising?

I guess the York people objected to the complacency of that conclusion. Because there's always been a feeling here that sure that's the way it tends to be but we should go and try and change that. So I think that's the sense in which we thought it was conservative.

On the other hand, apart from that, we thought it was a useful piece of literature.

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