

A UNIVERSITY PROBLEM

THE University of Toronto has taken a step which has been under contemplation by most of the Canadian universities for some years in deciding that first-year pass subjects will in future no longer be taught at the university but be passed back to the high school or collegiate institute. In other words, the secondary schools will have to take over a good proportion of the pass—as distinguished from honour—work which the university has had to do in the first year of the student's academic life.

The move has been rendered necessary, as the universities argue, by the huge increase in their attendance, an increase so great that first-year classes swamp the universities' facilities for handling them. A large proportion of these first-year students do not survive the examination tests at the end of the term. Either the standards of entrance are too low or the students who thus fall by the wayside at their first trial are not seriously bent on getting their degrees. But for them the university which they elect to attend for at least a year must provide accommodation and tuition just as it does for the studious young man or woman bent upon an academic career.

Quite possibly the universities have no other course to pursue than that in which Toronto is taking the pioneer step. But it would be a great pity if the Arts course—to which alone this policy is to apply — were thereby shortened in point of time, were to become a three-year instead of the traditional four-year course. It is manifestly unreasonable to ask the university to do much comparatively elementary work which the high school should do; but the student should not be deprived of the advantages of the full course within the universities' walls in any endeavour which may be made to lighten the burden upon these institutions.

For the university is not, after all, merely a place where young men and women go to listen to lectures and to try periodic examinations. A very great deal of the benefit of a university career is derived from sources other than text-books, from hourly contacts with other minds, from competitions other than those of class-lists, from the tradition and the prestige of the place itself. No student should be deprived of all this for the sake of mere "efficiency" in teaching or economy in administration. Every hour of the old four-year course is needed. No doubt the Arts courses can be bettered: they should not be shortened.
