

FBI investigation reveals fake 'diploma mill'

OTTAWA (CUP) — U.S. residents have been buying fake McGill and University of Toronto degrees through a U.S. "diploma mill," the Federal Bureau of Investigation has disclosed.

The FBI, in Operation Dipscom, discovered that 20 U.S. residents have fraudulent U of T diplomas, and "an undisclosed number" have fake diplomas from McGill.

Dennis Gunter, an Oregon entrepreneur operating Alumni Arts, the diploma factory, was sentenced Feb. 14 on two counts of mail and wire fraud in federal district court.

Gunter only offered fake degrees from the two Canadian universities, but sold degrees for up to 300 colleges and universities in the U.S. Evidence at recent U.S. Congressional hearings suggests more than 10,000 doctors throughout North America have fake medical degrees.

Gunter sold fake degrees to addresses in Calgary, Ottawa, Kitchener, Montreal, Toronto, Vancouver and Winnipeg. Most of these degrees were for American institutes, primarily in California.

One Toronto pharmacist bought a medical degree from Medical Education Placement Inc. for \$10,000. He testified to the Congressional select committee on aging that if it were not for his capture "I would have made a good doctor."

McGill registrar Jean-Paul Schuller did not seem too alarmed about the fake McGill degrees. "McGill's degrees are well enough recognized across North America that it would take a good forgery to trick someone," he said.

"The incidence of people trying to modify diplomas is on the increase," Schuller said. He blamed this on the difficult economic situa-

tion and a "perceived increase in competition" for jobs. Schuller said McGill investigates at least one case involving a possibly fraudulent diploma every month.

One big investigation last year led to a U of T student's expulsion after the schools discovered he had tampered with his McGill transcripts.

Schuller said Canadian universities regularly exchange lists of peo-

ple who may be holding fraudulent degrees through the association of registrars in Ottawa. "We sent notes saying 'should they receive an application for admission from so-and-so... this may be an alias,'" he said.

Schuller said he feels the crime is not so much those with the fake diplomas but those with real ones who may be beaten out of a job by someone with a faked record that

shows better grades.

He is surprised, however, that Gunter's operation was selling diplomas, noting that transcripts were the documents schools go by in North America. "In the Third world, though, the diploma is much more the thing that opens doors," Schuller said.

Asked where he was flattered that McGill diplomas were being faked, Schuller said he would

"much rather not get involved, even though it is a sort of back-handed compliment."

RCMP Sergeant Carl Stowski said he did not know if the RCMP was trying to track down Canadians with fake diplomas from U.S. universities, and if the RCMP was cooperating with an FBI effort, they would not comment on it.

Jobs for grads scarce

VANCOUVER (CUP) — Unemployment rates have surged dramatically for graduates of the University of British Columbia's technical and professional programs, a new survey shows.

Hardest hit were agriculture, nursing and accounting students who have unemployment rates of 23.3, 25.8 and 22.6 per cent respectively. In 1980, only four per cent of agriculture graduates and 4.5 per cent of accounting graduates were without jobs while every graduating nurse found work.

The survey, conducted by UBC's counselling and resources centre, documents the post graduate activities of nearly 90 per cent of the 3,777 1984 graduates from 21 faculties and schools.

Said counselling centre director Dick Shirran: "We're trying to give people a realistic idea of what students do with various types of degrees."

Other hard hit faculties include forestry and applied science with the unemployment rate jumping to 21.1 per cent from 1.6 and 0.9 per

cent respectively. Commerce students, who only had a 2.8 per cent 1980 unemployment rate, now face a 17.4 per cent rate.

Shirran attributes the high unemployment rates to the economic recession. He warns against generalizing from the survey because trends in employment are cyclical.

"Students have to be careful not to give up in their field and not react too quickly to surveys such as this," Shirran said.

Arts had a surprisingly low unemployment rate in the survey—8.8 per cent—which is actually an increase from the 1980 rate of 3.2 per cent. Graduates in dental hygiene, rehabilitation medicine, pharmacy, and landscape architecture all found jobs.

Shirran said the survey does not necessarily indicate better job prospects for arts students. "The survey means graduates of engineering, applied sciences and forestry wait around for a job in their field but arts graduates take just about anything."

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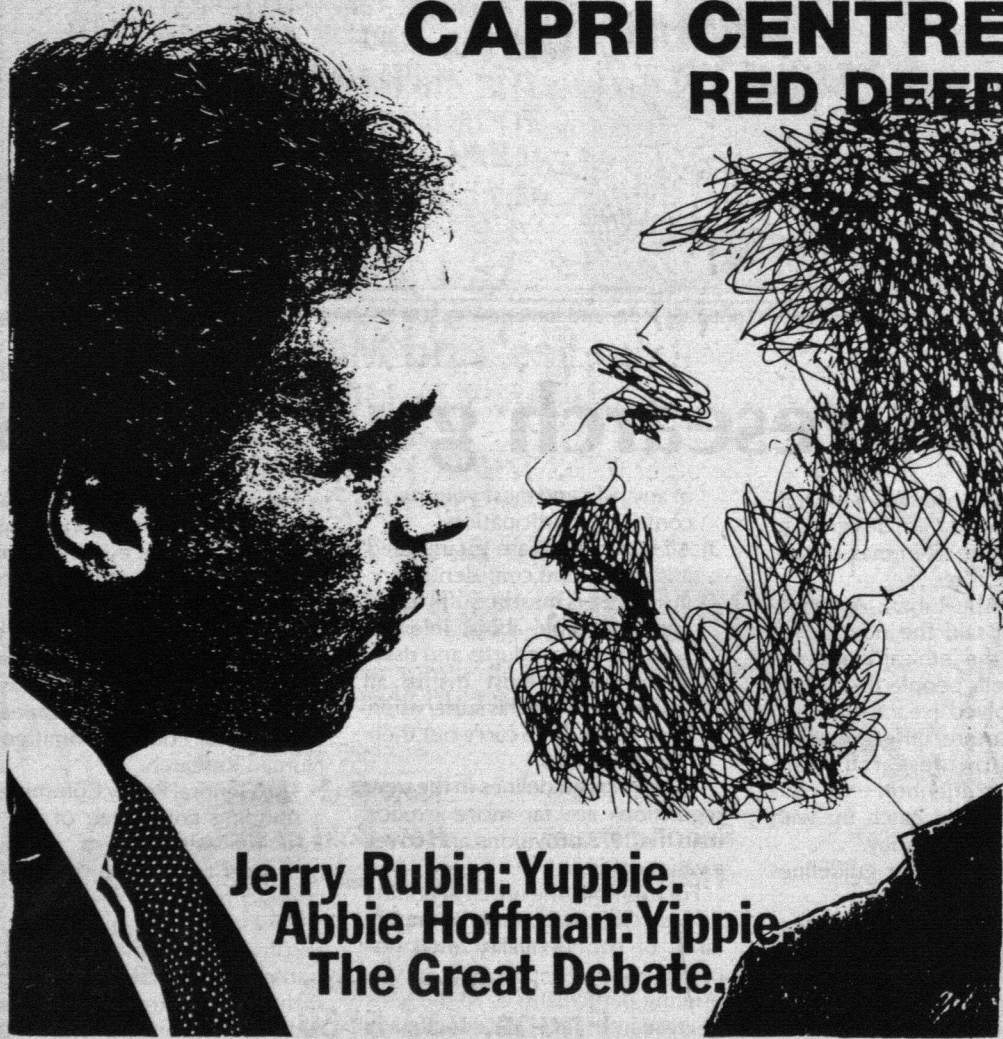
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