

Dr. M. R. Lupul:

## 'World Needs People Intellectually Flexible'

Gateway features presents a condensation of the text delivered by Dr. M. R. Lupul, associate professor of educational foundations, to the Fourth Edmonton District Convention of the Alberta Teachers' Association.

No other news media in Alberta has bothered to present an accurate account of his speech. Perhaps his critics should read his carefully prepared statement.

Since 1958 we have seen the growth of public colleges at Lethbridge, Medicine Hat, (and) Red Deer . . . In 1958 the Alberta Norwegian College Association in Camrose officially changed its name to Camrose Lutheran College and entered into an affiliation with the University of Alberta to offer several first year courses in the Arts, Sciences, and Education . . .

(In 1947 the purpose of this college was stated as the provision of regular high school "and also courses in religion for the purposes of promoting greater study and knowledge of the Bible as the Word of God"—Statutes of Alberta, 1947).

(The purpose was not changed with the name in 1958.) We thus find ourselves in the interesting situation of supporting with public funds a Bible-orientated Lutheran institution whose philosophy of education has been stated by Dr. Arthur Leonard Miller, author of *Readings in the Lutheran Philosophy of Education* . . . in the following terms: . . . A Lutheran philosophy of education begins with scripture. It accepts the truth of God's revelation and applies reason only in those areas which the Lord has left to Christian judgment and discretion. Even in this realm of the application of reason it takes into careful account the direction of Scripture and is careful not to run counter to the teachings of Scripture. It examines the findings of science and integrates them into its thinking. It interprets such



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findings, however, in the light of Scripture, and if there is a conflict, it is Scripture that has priority (quoted in J. Park, *Selected Readings in the Philosophy of Education* . . .)

If you believe first-year university students should attend institutions whose educational philosophy would circumscribe reason and science in the manner described, there is little more to be said. However, if you feel, as I do, that such an intellectual climate would be stifling, there is much more to be said, particularly when one remembers that no college intends to offer a one-year program forever . . .

The precedent set in 1958 was followed in 1963 by the establishment of . . . the College St. Jean . . . in affiliation with the University of Alberta in Edmonton . . . by the Oblate of Mary Immaculate, a Roman Catholic order engaged in missionary work in the Canadian West for over a hundred years. The order has always counted among its members a preponderant number of French-Canadian priests. The present rector of the College is Father Arthur Lacerte and, of the committee who negotiated the agreement of affiliation with the University, at least five members were Oblate clergy, four being of French or French-Canadian origin.

Unlike other junior colleges in Alberta, the College St. Jean is also affiliated with the University of Ottawa, another Oblate institution . . . (and) offers a two-year university program to its students. Students who enrol for the Bachelor of Education degree through the College spend a third consecutive year in the Faculty of Education on the main Edmonton campus.

One of the main arguments for affiliation presented to the University authorities by spokesmen for the College St. Jean was that the province is badly in need of bilingual teachers at the elementary school level . . .

When it was suggested by some University representatives that the University itself might upgrade its program for the preparation of bilingual teachers, spokesmen for the College declared that their institution alone could provide the type of atmosphere or environment that would be most conducive to the preparation of bilingual teachers . . . The College won its case in May 1963 and is now in its second year of operation. Through the bilingual teachers it prepares, it intends to give more substance to the bilingual Canada in which we are supposed to be living. The fact that the jury is still out on whether Canada is unilingual, bilingual, or multilingual is apparently of little or no consequence . . . (as) is the fact that teachers prepared in an outpost of French-Catholic nationalism (the atmosphere or environment referred to earlier) will be able to teach in any public school in Alberta.

Of little consequence, too, apparently is the inconsistency of our own provincial government. Premier Manning, on the one hand, tries to give the popular impression that he is opposed to the bicultural and bilingual view of Canada dear to most French Catholics in Canada.

On the other hand this government encourages the University to establish a bilingual teacher training institution, which Louis A. Desrochers, President of the Association of Canadienne-Francaise de l'Alberta and a leading light in the establishment of the College, has declared to be a sign of "the ever-growing acceptance of biculturalism" in the province. (For Premier Manning's views see *Edmonton Journal*, July 11, 1963; for Mr. Desrocher's views see *ibid*, April 26, 1963.)

The nature and purpose of state-supported higher education . . . should be, in the words of the Majority Report of the Cameron Royal Commission, "to stimulate initiative, critical thinking and ability to be intellectually self-directing." I take this to mean that each new generation should engage in critical inquiry regarding the beliefs and values which we adults transmit to our children through the family, the church, the newspaper, the mass media, and the political and economic institutions.

This critical inquiry should be genuine and of a depth to disturb, even confuse, and certainly frustrate the young, for most students of human behaviour agree that human thinking has its roots in conflict, doubt, and uncertainty—in what are sometimes termed, irritable, indeterminate or problematic situations . . . not so completely indeterminate, however, as to cause factors in man's environment . . .

What is crucial is that the challenge and the defense of conventional wisdom be genuine and that each student experience both the challenge and the defense through instructors of deep, personal intellectual commitment. This means that universities should have a great variety of debunkers of ideals and radicals on their staffs, as well as apologists for, and facile compromisers with, the status quo. Happily, most state universities attract their share of both types and that is precisely their strength.

That is also what differentiates them most from religious colleges. The latter tend to be very protective of the young.

They may teach students by confronting them with atheism but no confirmed atheist will long draw his salary in a religious college. They may consider arguments against the divinity of Jesus, but unless the institution has very marked liberal leanings, the student will, in time, be made to "see" the falsehood of such a position.

In short, religious colleges tend to have pat answers to some of life's most difficult questions—in fact, one demeans the sponsors of these institutions by even treating their answers as mere "answers"; one should more properly speak of "truths". These truths may be questioned and discussed; they may even be rejected. But in the view of their sponsors they remain "truths"—an approach to knowledge wholly contrary to the basis on which truth is determined in every other field of human endeavour.

Real education, the kind of education required in our time of ideological warfare, only begins when students . . . are challenged in one class by a devout Christian, in another by an atheist, in a third by a slave of antiquity in a fourth by a utilitarian, a fifth by a Marxist . . . in a sixth by a strong conservative . . . This is difficult to ensure, and our own provincial university still falls far short of the mark. Nor will the situation much improve as long as members of the Legislative Assembly—cabinet ministers at that—continue to refer to free thinking, iconoclastic instructors as "screwballs" and "nuts" and . . . tell those who dare to challenge our conventional wisdom to "go back to the countries from whence they came."

However, if state universities have difficulty in becoming centres of liberal learning, religious colleges, by the very nature of their task—whether it be to make students more Christ-like or to confront them with the Bible—cannot



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with free, unrestricted choice of ideas, philosophies and religions . . . The founders of religious colleges are mainly concerned to refute 'falsehood' and protect 'truth'—as they see it. That the falsehoods are truths to others and should be treated as such is conveniently ignored. The main goal is to inculcate the young with their own particular brand of dogma and doctrine . . .

(Religious colleges) are also too ethnocentric. Their very survival depends upon cultivating a belief in the superiority of their own point of view and in developing a feeling of suspicion; even contempt, for the ideas and values of other groups. As a result, they fail to provide the variety of intellectual fare which raises real, not simulated, confusion, doubt, and frustration upon which a deeply personal and enduring philosophy of life can be built. If the philosophy of life should be Marxist, even communist or fascist, we . . . have nothing to fear as long as . . . we keep up a constant war on the home front against . . . social diseases (slums, unemployment, etc.). (If we fail we have) much to fear—and rightly so—from impatient youth. And to save itself, (society) might well place much of its early higher education in the hands of religious institutions, with their long heritage of adjusting to social change rather than initiating it. However, it should be clear that such

institutions are incapable of producing the kind of people needed in today's world.

In today's world we need people who are intellectually flexible. People who are not narrow nationalists, whether that nationalism be religious or political or a combination of both. People who are prepared to challenge, not only the political imperialism of the Soviets, but our own economic imperialism and the religious imperialism that helps to sustain it.

We need people who do not refer to Samoans or to the African pygmies as barbarians or pagans. People who understand the nature of culture and realize that all religions and philosophies (secular or transcendental) are of equal merit to the people who believe in them, and, as long as they main-



'concepts must be challenged'

tain the viability of the particular way of life, conscious and deliberate interference with them is the first step in the destruction of that culture—a highly arrogant enterprise, at best.

(Does this mean that) interference with the fascist beliefs of a Hitler or a Mussolini also becomes unjustifiable? Perhaps so but let me remind you that we are not without some responsibility for the rise of such ideologies and such dictators. If we had created a stronger League of Nations . . . neither Hitler nor Mussolini would have dared to impose their views on other nations. And without war, it is conceivable that, in time, the German and Italian people themselves might have devised means to liberalize their respective regimes.

The point is that all people have the right to live out their lives under whatever ideologies, philosophies, or religions they choose. It is not our task to impose our ideology, philosophy or religion on other people; it is our task to ensure that we do not precipitate conditions . . . which will close the avenues of intellectual debate.

Nor is this subject removed from the topic of this talk. Religion, by its very nature, is at the foundation of any way of life. Because of this, religious colleges have a vested interest in our way of life and find it difficult to challenge it without challenging the basic values and beliefs which have grown up in a Christian context.

Yet, much in our way of life—in particular the concept of absolute national sovereignty, the concept of Jesus as the Son of the one true God, the concept of private enterprise as the one true Christian road to economic plenty—needs to be challenged and modified if other nations are to trust us sufficiently to join us in working together for that 'one world' so desperately needed today.

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