

# The Wright Commission

## Universities need greater control, higher fees

By MARILYN SMITH

Is the Wright report right in its approach and remedy to the current situation on the post secondary education scene? The next few months of hearings and reactions to the Commission on Post Secondary Education in Ontario promises to generate controversial feedback.

### Main points

After the Globe and Mail printed the report from the Wright Commission on Post Secondary Education in Ontario last Tuesday, the 13 commissioners hurriedly called a press conference Friday.

Someone had leaked the report to the Globe. If the recommendations are ever implemented, the ramifications on students, faculty and the world outside will be phenomenal.

There are three main changes which will effect the universities now: higher fees, greater government control, and a greater emphasis on adult and part-time education. The draft report is out for discussion but will be finally tabled in the Ontario legislature by June.

#### Higher fees

- In higher fees, you as a student can expect to:
- pay \$625 (Arts and Science) and \$750 (law) which is roughly one half the total educational costs;
  - get student grants only if your parents earn under \$10,000 (the median income in Ontario for 1970.)
  - receive student loans on an interest bearing basis if your parents earn over \$10,000.
  - receive no student grants after three years of university but loans to continue in honors or any professional schools;
  - pay back that loan in 15 years with interest or have it forgiven due to lack of income;
  - contract your service to the federal or Ontario government instead of paying back a loan;
  - have a chance at a limited number of graduate scholarships of \$4,000 plus tuition.

#### Increased government control

Increased government control means for all intents and purposes — complete government control. About 86 percent of all funds come from the federal and provincial governments. The rest comes from the student.

The Wright Commission wants:

- a Senior Advisory Committee to coordinate all avenues of education (universities, colleges and various institutions) with six members from the public (commerce and labor) and six from the institutes who will sit with the minister of education.
- three coordinating boards for universities, colleges of applied arts and "the open sector" (museums, libraries etc.) each with six members from the public (commerce and labor), six from provincial organizations (faculty, staff, students) and a full time chairman appointed by the minister of education;
- each coordinating board to devote five percent of its budget to research;
- all provincial support for post secondary education to be funded through one government department;
- a University of Ontario to offer correspondence courses via television and radio and to award degrees for work done outside the university.

#### Part-Time education

Greater emphasis on part-time education means exactly that. With increased tuition fees, and decreasing emphasis on institutional education, full-time enrolment is expected to drop. Along with a University of Ontario to coordinate non-formal education, the Wright Commission demands that:

- students be able to study at two campuses simultaneously;
- universities open all courses to part-time students;
- admission to professional practise be open via oral and written exams without discrimination against those without formal degrees;
- satellite campuses be built and affiliated with present universities in new areas;
- more colleges be built with enrolments of 200 to 1,000;
- all university libraries and museums be open to public use.
- an end to job discrimination because of non-attendance at an educational institution;
- abolish Grade 13;
- where a high number of qualified applicants exist in a highly competitive professional area such as medicine and dentistry, a lottery system be established to open up the ranks to lower income groups.

The 72 recommendations, commissioners state, are interrelated and therefore interdependent. Reaction on too many fronts could feasibly threaten the status of the entire report.

The basis of the report derives its roots in questions that have arisen over the last few years about the meaning and value of post-secondary education.

Why education in an institution? Why education for the young in years of continuous schooling? Why degrees and diplomas? Why post-secondary education at all? Such are the questions.

For the average Joe or Josephine student, the report, with its overall philosophy of getting education out of the lecture halls and to the people, may be just a little late. The average student already knows his education is not so much an investment as a consumer product. He knows because that's the story he's getting from the employers these days.

Many students are creating their own post-secondary alternatives — travelling abroad, working and hitching their way around the world, or working at routine jobs that leave them free to read and talk to others in self-study efforts. Many are leaving the institutionalized forms of post-secondary education to develop in the context of the community, with involvement in community projects.

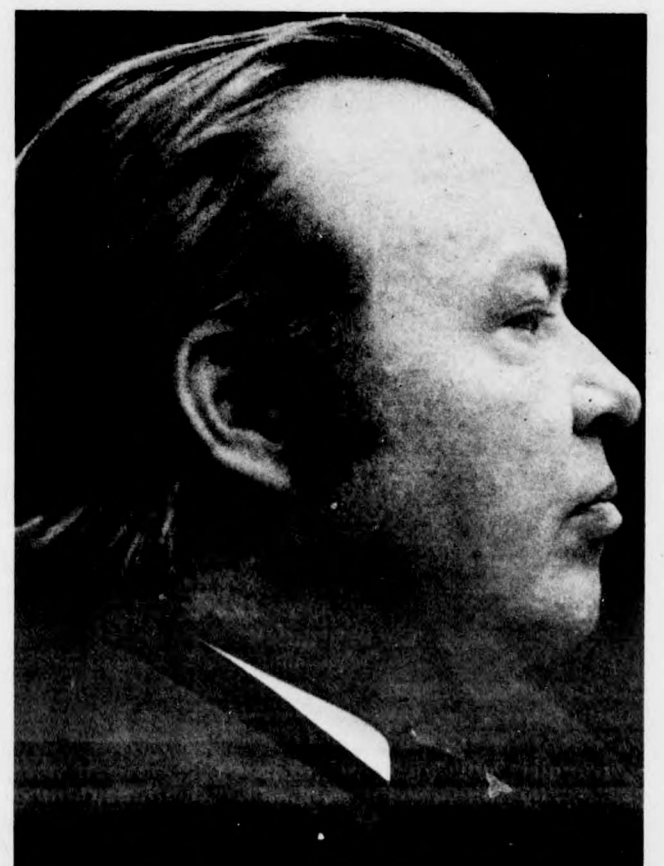
At York, the surprise came in September when 4,000 post-freshmen undergraduates didn't return. Added to this was a lower enrolment of freshmen students right across the country.

The report's basic premise is that post-secondary education should be available to all, throughout a lifetime, and through many channels, not just the standard institutions. The report attempts to integrate living with learning.

Will it work? For those not too entangled in the economic and social problems of simply surviving, perhaps. For the rest, without accompanying changes in other realms, the report alone isn't enough.

The commission recommends a 50-50 split of educational costs between the student and the government. This split refers to educational operational costs. The Commission says instructional and research costs should be separated in order to get at the exact instructional figure. Many university administrators will say research is inseparable from education.

For the student, it means he or she pays half of a tuition fee set by the university. In general science and arts, the proposed student fee is \$625. In the professional faculties and graduate programs, the educational cost per student is higher. In honors arts and law, the suggested price per student is \$750.



Minister of University Affairs John White.



Commission on  
Post-Secondary  
Education in Ontario

DRAFT REPORT

