

CROSSCANADA

Feds want "skills factories"

TORONTO(CUP)-The federal government released a \$19-million report last week calling for the Canadian education system to gear learning exclusively towards job training and market demands.

But some economists say the plan would turn universities into "skills factories" while doing little to achieve real economic improvements for students graduating into a recession.

The Action Plan for Prosperity—a government-funded initiative aims to "create new opportunities for Canadians for Canadians to prosper in a rapidly changing world."

The plan contains 17 education-related proposals including forging stronger links between the corporate sector and high schools and universities.

Arthur Krugar, director of the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education said that by the time students are trained, the needs of the market could shift dramatically. Krugar adds that "our ability to foresee the needs of the market are very poor. Any forecast about computers 40 years ago would have been completely wrong."

No answer, no marks

OTTAWA(CUP)-Some university students and officials believe that failing to participate in Maclean's magazine's annual university rankings will reflect badly on their schools.

Some universities refused to answer sections of the 12-page questionnaire sent out to Canadian universities last summer. Failing to answer different questions resulted in low rankings.

According to Ann Dowsett Johnston, editor in charge of the magazine's rankings, abstention by universities ultimately affected their rankings. For each categorical omission, a university was given the lowest score in that category.

Françoise Talbot, a spokesperson for the Université du Québec at Montreal questioned the survey's value. "We did not answer because we felt it was misleading on the methodological side. We find it questionable to globally rank universities in this way because they are so different," said Talbot.

The Université du Québec was not the only school that questioned the survey.

The University College of Cape Breton was one of the schools that refused to answer questions asked under the survey's "reputation" category. UCCB interim president Bill Gallivan stated that a university's reputation was invariably correlated with age. He said that penalized his institution, which is the youngest university in Canada. It received its charter in 1982.

Classes cancelled for vigil

TORONTO(CUP)-York University students won't have to skip classes Dec. 4 to attend a vigil in memory of 14 women killed at Montreal's L'Ecole Polytechnique three years ago.

The university's senate decided recently to cancel classes from 12:30 to 1:30 that day so students, faculty and teaching assistants would be free to take part in annual Women's Remembrance Day events.

Although no one voted against the proposal, many faculty members complained there wasn't enough advance notice of the cancellation.

York registrar also spoke against the proposal. Spokesperson Gene Genzel said that he was concerned that cancelling classes would affect student's opportunity to learn.

But student council president Nikki Gershbnain said women's safety is equally important. "If we can't guarantee the safety of the women who come here to learn, I'm not convinced we are committed to accessibility," she said.

Gershbnain cited examples of threats to female students at universities including a September incident at York where a man shouted "Long live Marc Lepine," in front of a bookstore line up.

"An hour off so women can empower themselves, mourn and deal with reality is not a lot to ask," said Michele Chai, a student council vice-president.

York's Women's Centre and the student council introduced this year's proposal, which was supported by the Canadian Federation of Students as well as number of campus groups, officials and the senate's student caucus.

To commemorate the deaths of the 14 women, Queen's University in Kingston, has cancelled classes for the entire day.

news

Academic freedom a hot subject

New policy sparks debate

by Emily MacNaughton
& Ryan Stanley

Dalhousie's proposed Policy on Discriminatory Harassment provoked mixed response at a public forum held on Wednesday, November 4.

The forum was organized by the Committee to Develop a Policy on Racism and Sexism. Despite a small turnout, many of those in attendance were eager to congratulate the Committee's work, as well as to voice their concerns and doubts about the proposal.

The proposed policy, published in the October 21 issue of the *Dalhousie News*, is the latest version of a document that has been in the works since the fall of 1990. An earlier draft of the policy, which the Committee had hoped would be final, failed to secure the approval of the university Senate in meetings held in the spring of 1992. As a result, the Committee sought input from members of the campus community, and these consultations led to a substantial revision of the text. The forum was designed to stimulate interest and response on campus to this most recent proposal.

The forum opened with a series of

dramatic presentations, performed by students, depicting incidents of harassment which have occurred at Dalhousie. The forms of harassment and prejudice portrayed in social settings, in the classroom and in textbooks, to name a few of the many examples, underlined the reality that harassment takes place at all levels.

Sue Sherwin, Professor of Phi-

"Racism and sexism can't be legislated away"

losophy and member of the group which drafted the proposal, then presented the policy's objectives. The key element is the suggestion that Dalhousie establish a permanent Committee on Discriminatory Harassment. This body would be charged with educating the university community about issues related to discriminatory harassment, and with receiving complaints and serving as a formal or informal mediator as a means of resolving conflicts. The Committee could also recommend disciplinary actions.

The composition of the proposed Committee on Discriminatory Harassment drew comments from several people during the question-and-answer period. As it stands, the Committee would include members chosen by the Aboriginal Students' Association, the Black Canadian Students, the Dalhousie Women's Collective, the Women's Faculty Association, the Bisexual, Gay and Lesbian Association of Dalhousie (BGLAD!) and the International Students' Association. Other members would represent faculty, staff, the Dalhousie Students' Union, graduate students and the university administration. Some speakers asked why students with disabilities were not represented. Others indicated their fear that additions to the Committee might make it too cumbersome.

The issue which has sparked the most controversy is that of the implications of the proposed policy for academic freedom. One faculty member at the forum called for a clearer definition of academic freedom. He said he was concerned that bigotry "often masquerades under the title of 'academic freedom'", citing Philip

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Dal number six: MacLean's

by Marie MacPherson

The second annual ranking of Canadian universities by *MacLean's* magazine finally hit the newsstands November 5, following up last year's survey which resulted in outrage, controversy and the best-selling issue in *MacLean's* history.

Protest arose from the post-secondary education community concerning the 1991 evaluation of Canada's universities, large and small, well-endowed and otherwise, on a single scale.

The 1992 feature, titled "Measuring excellence", rates 45 universities distinguished by three categories and based on 22 criteria.

The three ranking categories are schools offering mainly undergraduate programs, schools offering a broad program range at the undergraduate and graduate levels, and schools with major doctoral programs and medical schools. The criteria on which the universities were rated included class size, average grade of entering students, percentage of faculty members holding PhDs, operating budgets, library holdings per student, and reputation.

The new changes mean for Dalhousie a ranking of number six under the medical and doctoral category, up from last year's ninth position. Dalhousie was the only Maritime university to be placed in this category and was preceded by McGill,

University of Toronto, Queen's, University of British Columbia and MacMaster.

Mausumi Banerjee, Vice-President Academic of the Dalhousie Student Union, said, "It's impressive that Dal ranked sixth, and we should be proud because the universities ahead of us are hard acts to follow."

Among the schools offering mainly undergraduate programs, five Maritime universities ranked in the top ten. Mount Allison placed first,

"Hopefully the university will strive toward a higher goal."

Acadia was awarded third place, and Saint Mary's, St. Francis Xavier and Mount Saint Vincent ranked sixth, seventh and eighth respectively.

In the category of comprehensive universities, Waterloo placed first, with University of New Brunswick ranking seventh and Memorial eighth.

Banerjee, despite being pleased with Dal's placing, expressed some concern about how the information for the ranking was gathered. *MacLean's* derives its statistics primarily from surveys filled out by university presidents, along with some

consultation with the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada and with institutional experts.

"This [Dal's ranking] is wonderful as long as Dalhousie is indeed giving to the community, its students and professors what it says it is giving," she said. "And if what is printed is not completely accurate, then hopefully the university will strive toward a higher goal."

Banerjee, while agreeing with Dal's number-one ranking on the criterion of class sizes at the third- and fourth-year levels, is worried about the implications this could have for program reductions currently being considered by the university Senate. "My concern also is that the Senate will cut programs that have low demand for them, and I hope that they will not start to cut advanced classes because there is a low enrolment in them," she said.

Dalhousie also achieved a number-one rating on scholarships and bursaries as a percentage of the university's budget. Banerjee said, "I find it [the top rating] surprising and hope that it is accurate and that efforts to maintain that position will result."

Dalhousie's Dean of Science, Warwick Kimmins, said, "For me, the ranking was a pleasant confirmation of Dalhousie as sixth among Canadian national universities. The

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