



—Terry Malanchuk photo

Max Wyman is good at that—adding dimensions. When he isn't doing it with Einstein's relativity equations, he is doing it with the university.

"I'd like to see this university a laboratory," he said quietly, "a laboratory in the sense we never get fixed ideas, set methods which we keep unchanged and try to defend."

Some things at U of A are out of step with Dr. Wyman's idea of a laboratory of progressive change.

"The lecture system has been used so much that it has developed beyond what we can defend," he said with slow firmness.

"We must put emphasis on the students' learning. I don't believe in keeping the students so busy. They go home, and they are still doing class assignments."

The constant programming defeats a student's creativity, he believes.

"The ability to learn is more important than the material. If all you get out of a university is the material, that material soon becomes obsolete and you become obsolete as a person."

The night of October 6, he had stood under the floodlights of the Jubilee Auditorium to deliver his inaugural address as president of U of A.

"If the university community and society are found to share with me some common understanding of these concepts of knowledge, truth, freedom and dissent," he said then, "we may begin to plan the future development of this university."

"If not, I may well be the first president of the University of Alberta who did not survive his own installation."

And he had proceeded to elaborate his philosophy on universities and how they should relate to society.

Instead of warning of the dangers posed to the university by radical dissent, he stated, "No matter how repugnant the message of dissent may be to a particular generation, this lonely voice of one generation may become the majority voice of a future generation."

"A nation that stifles all dissent can experience only a past and present."

"Such a nation has no future."

His listeners were perhaps a little surprised, but no one stoned him off the platform.

There was a minor stir when his words came out in the press. The Toronto Globe and Mail printed almost the whole text of his speech.

People in many quarters noticed Dr. Wyman did not seem to agree with the tenets of the Hayakawa school of college presidents.

Does he like the job?

"Yes," he said, "and no."

"I don't have the great number of committees to attend that I did when I was academic vice-president. I actually have more time now."

"So I have tried to keep an open door policy. Anyone who wants to see me can just drop around. They stand a fifty-fifty chance of getting to see me. Almost anyone who phones will find me here to talk to."

"A fair number of students have come around for a chat."

"But there are many more calls on my time to speak in public. I must confess I find this difficult. I'm no oracle."

Dr. Wyman has been visiting various country towns lately, with a view to helping the university be a presence throughout the province.

"I speak for a few minutes, and then we have bull

sessions," he said. "After all, our community is not just the city. We are a university of Alberta. Our community is all Alberta. The university has to become involved with the people, in their thoughts, their desires. A university's goals may not be society's goals—but each is not isolated from the other."

He held up his hands, the fingers of his right hand touching a few on his left hand.

"This is how I like to think of the university and society—each on our own plane, but with some overlap."

"If we ignore society, society ignores us. Society is not always aware of the things it needs. That's why a university must always be critical of the society which supports it."

Dr. Wyman knows the community of this university. He was born in it, and is a product of it. The son of Russian-Jewish immigrants, he was born in Lethbridge in 1916. Although his father had little formal education, he wanted the best for his children.

Dr. Wyman went to Strathcona High School in Edmonton, and entered an Honors Mathematics program at U of A in 1932.

Things have changed since.

"When I was here as a young student, U of A was a good undergrad school," he recalled. "I was well-prepared to enter the California Institute of Technology, one of the top grad schools in the States, in 1937."

"But the biggest change, which has occurred in large part since Dr. McCalla became dean of graduate studies, has been the transition from a being just a good undergrad college to being a good graduate school as well."

"We are doing much more research, and have different goals, than we did 30 years ago."

Since his inauguration, Dr. Wyman has "done a lot of reading." His shelves are lined with books on university structure, university teaching, and student dissent.

He has watched and analyzed the campus, and come to the conclusion that our worst problem is double-barreled.

"The university is growing old and growing big—two events which tend to make it resist change."

"We must find a way of reforming it. I don't know how. It has been suggested we could do it by getting greater student participation in General Faculty Council. One difficulty here is that the student members would change every year."

"But I'm quite prepared to support the move. I'm prepared to try the method. If it turns out not to be the right way to reform, we'll just have to find one."

He has other worries.

As he looks out at the thousands of students heading in and out of the Students' Union across the street, he often wishes the present campus had been sold back in the early fifties, when the university could have bought more space in the city outskirts and even replaced its physical plant with little net loss.

"But now," he sighed, "we have \$150 million invested here. We can't move. We could have had adequate space, adequate parking."

"But now we have no choice. Personally, I regret the demolition of Garneau. If only people 20 years ago had had enough vision . . ."

The crowding will become worse in the next few years, he predicted.

"The provincial government has set an enrollment ceiling on this campus of 25,000 students. Myself, I think we will go beyond that, for a few years at least."

Is it possible to go beyond by a few thousand students, then come back down when the completion of the planned St. Albert campus cuts some of the U of A enrollment load?

"It's easier to come down than to go up," said Dr. Wyman. "But you know, I'm not worried about staff and facilities for the extra 2,000 students we will have to accommodate. I'm worried about staff and facilities for the first 25,000."

"We're at the mercy of the government as far as developing into a first rate university. They hold the purse."

Dr. Wyman has tried to remain a teacher, even in his position as president.

"It's only been six years since I left the classroom," he said. "This year, I kept two doctoral students working with me."

A graduate of U of A in honors mathematics in 1937, he went on to a Ph.D. at the California Institute of Technology, graduating magna cum laude. He taught briefly at the University of Saskatchewan, then returned to U of A where he taught from 1943 to 1964.

In 1963 he was appointed Dean of Science, in 1964 Vice-President academic, and in 1969 was chosen President by a committee of students, faculty, alumni, the Senate and the Board of Governors.

He was elected to the Royal Society of Canada in 1951, and to the New York Academy of Sciences in 1968.

Just as he has refused to let the presidency cut him off from teaching, he has refused to let it arrest his academic research. This year he has even published a paper in his field. A specialist in asymptotic series and special functions, and in Einstein's field equations in general relativity, he is nationally known for work in both fields.

As a scholar and professor, as well as administrator, he is deeply concerned with the failure of the tenure system in use at U of A right now.

"Tenure was originally conceived to protect a university staff from the interference of the church and the state, if we look at history. Although Professor Allen has made the point that such interference could still happen, I don't believe tenure will protect you against a Hitler."

"We have given tenure enough trial. It's time we drafted something new. These regulations don't stand up under a tough case."

But changing the system will be very difficult.

"There is a fundamental difference in philosophy at the root of the problem. Some people feel the university hires a man when he is put on probation. If we refuse him tenure at the end of probation we have fired him," he explained.

"Others say that it is up to the man to prove he deserves tenure during probation, and that he is not hired until the end of the probation."

"These are two different interpretations. In the first, to dismiss a man you need a case which would stand up in a court of law. By the other view, if there is the slightest opinion a man shouldn't have tenure, then he should go."

How long does Dr. Wyman look ahead?

"I'm not going to be president forever," he said. "My contract is for five years."

"But in those five years, I would like to see enough buildings and staff adequate for our students, and I would like to see the university increase its national and international reputation."

Then, he will probably go back to teaching and research and, as he says, "let somebody else have a crack at it."