

# Investigating Horsman's brain

## ...and other post-secondary education grey areas

Teri Paulgaard, a Gateway reporter in an interview with Minister of Advanced Education and Manpower, James Horsman:

Mention "Horsman" and the strangest words come to mind: "cutbacks", "increased tuition," "bad vibes." To some, the Honorable James Horsman may appear to have a private vendetta against the average student, or even against higher education itself.

I couldn't help but wonder if Mr. Horsman's opinion of university was at the stem of his actions (or inactions). The only way to find out was to ask the man. So I did...

by Teri Paulgaard

What benefits does a person receive by obtaining a university education?

**Horsman:** University education continues to be a very important part of personal development. It gives a person the opportunity to learn how to think and learn. While it is true it may not give them all the technical skills they may need in certain fields of employment, it teaches them to be adaptable.

I think that we must continue the quest for knowledge and assimilation of knowledge - creation of new knowledge. All these things are part of the universities' mandate and should be continued. In other words, we want people to be whole people and we are not adjusting our post-secondary education in this province so that our students become part of the "machine."

How do universities compare to technical schools?

**Horsman:** Well, it is very difficult to compare the two. Technical institutions are by and large designed to provide shorter courses of training. But within technical institutions and colleges emphasis is also placed on learning, how to learn, learning how to be adaptable in the future. I was asked almost an identical question a week ago today in Medicine Hat College by a student who put it to me this way, "Look," she said, "I am enrolled in a two year program to be a laboratory technician. They're making me take English and history as part of my course. Why are they doing that to me?" And I said this, "First of all, that decision is made by the Board of Governors and by the faculty councils of the institutions, not by the government directly. I think the reason that they give you is they want you to be a whole person, not just another cog in the machine."

I think that is true of all our post-secondary approaches and I think we should keep it that way.

Do you feel the quality of education has gone down?

**Horsman:** No, I don't. Matter of fact, I believe we have in Alberta excellent universities. I am particularly excited by the increasing demand for more courses. Enrollment is on the increase.

I am encouraged by Athabasca University's great success in attracting many people who cannot get away from their homes or from their farms or from their small towns across Alberta or Canada, who are enrolling and taking courses by what was considered a few years ago as totally unconventional means; the use of the telephone, video tapes, tape recorders and all those things.

I'm very encouraged to see the tremendous growth of enrollment there.

So I think this is in fact a great improvement in education.

Where are the jobs today? What about the future?

**Horsman:** It is always very difficult to predict the future. So much can happen in a relatively short time. For example, five years ago, who would expect the development of the microchip? I think that's what they call it. I'm not much of a technical person, but the chip has been used for computerization, who would have thought five years ago that this development would have led us into this tremendous explosion in the field of technology and computers. So, obviously, that's one area where there will be many more job opportunities in the future.

And the institutions in their planning should be working towards that end. We are improving programming in computers, engineering. More courses are being developed in institutions. Technology and so on; that's one area.

Generally speaking, it is fair to say Alberta is going through a marked change in our economic development. A few years ago it was almost exclusively an agriculture economy. Now it is moving to one which is based on agriculture and the extraction of oil and gas, to a new effort to upgrade our natural resources including agricultural products, oil and gas in this province. So there are going to be more job opportunities in that area.

One other field a lot of people don't recognize is the tremendous growth in financial institutions taking place in Alberta. Major financial institutions have made decisions to locate western offices, sometimes head offices, in Alberta. It is something we overlook....that type of job opportunity in the financial and investment field is going to cause a lot of graduates in Commerce, Masters of Business Administration programs and other associated jobs to go with it.

Those new developments are having quite a diversified effect on the economy.

What advice would you give to a young person looking towards the future?

**Horsman:** First I would advise them to consult very carefully with their career counsellors in their schools. They also have, in Alberta, Career Guidance Councils located in most of the larger communities which would provide a great deal of information about job opportunities which do exist in Alberta and other parts of the world.

And then of course I would advise them to do well in school, work hard and to try and achieve excellence....one of the things they may achieve is one of the Alberta Heritage Scholarships which we are making available now to high school students who go on to post-secondary education.

And be aware of the vast number of job opportunities and career opportunities that exist out there.

What about mature students?

**Horsman:** The opportunity for the mature students to return to education so that they can adapt to a career change or take advantage of new job opportunities is one of the major concerns of our whole system. We have to encourage more diversity in providing credit programming to people in that area. That's one of the reasons we are diversifying so very substantially through out the province in the college system.

Is there anything you'd like to add?

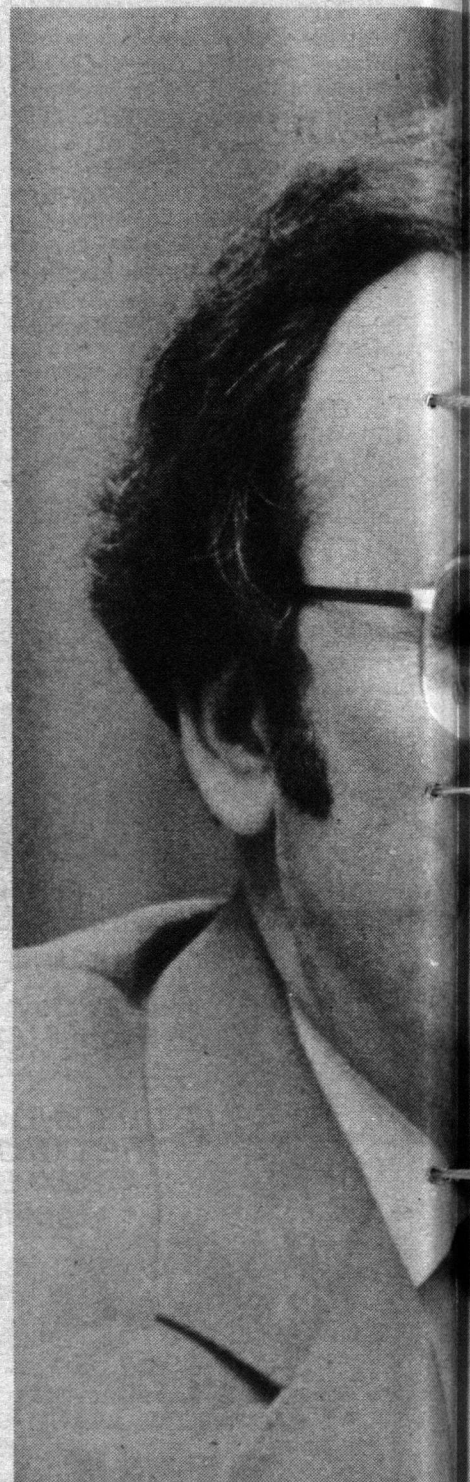
**Horsman:** I think we must do this, all of this process must be accomplished with the cooperation of the general public and with the least amount of government interference in the process. That is to say, interference with the institutions themselves. They plan the type of programming that they, along with government, identifies as being needed for the future.

Then who would actually determine the courses offered, students or the job opportunities available?

**Horsman:** The institutions themselves, through their board of governors, the

general faculty councillors - they are the ones who should be making the decisions. And really, that's the way it happens today.

We do, however, tell the universities "This is the information we have about the jobs," and then it is up to the universities themselves to plan the type of programming necessary to meet those job needs. That's the way I want to run this thing.



Jim Horsman, minister of advanced education, include tuition?

## CutbacksCutbacksCutbacksCutbacksCutbacksCutbacksCutbacks

### Academic effects

### Agriculture and Forestry

The Faculty of Agriculture and Forestry was forced to implement a quota 4 years ago. Weekly student hours have increased by over 100 per cent between 1970-71 and the present. The number of full-time equivalent staff employed by the faculty has increased by approximately 40 per cent during the same time period.

### Arts

Over the past decade, the Faculty of Arts has experienced a 129 per cent increase in net operating fund expenditures compared to an average increase across all Faculties of 170 per

cent. This represents the second lowest increase and does not take into consideration a 1979 Consumer Price Index of 191.3 (1971 equals 100).

The Faculty continues to express concern that it is unable to provide the desired variety of courses, for specialization or student interest.

In general, the Faculty must struggle to support its existing complement of programmes and is limited in its ability to expand into new areas. It is particularly hard hit by the Provincial government's reluctance to support the concept of a liberal education.

### Dentistry

Any reduction in University funding directly affects the proper operation of the Dental Clinic and the quality of care provided to the community. The outpatients clinic is funded by education allocated dollars, unlike Medicine where funding is acquired from the

Department of Health Services.

The limited increase in operating funds for supplies and sundries has not kept pace with inflation and the depressed Canadian dollar. The net result has been an increase in the price of the student dental kit.

### Bus. Admin. and Commerce

This faculty instituted a quota in 1977 as the result of insufficient funding:

343 qualified first year applicants were denied admission this year.

446 qualified transfer students were denied admission also.

The Faculty currently has academic staff positions it cannot fill. There are three reasons why: Working conditions - uncompetitive teaching load; Uncompetitive salaries, and Lack of Graduates at the Advanced Level - 5 vacancies for every