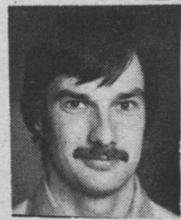


W5 continues to twist facts



David Marshall is a former president of the International Students' Association.

by David Marshall

A documentary or public affairs feature need not be objective. Any subjectivity, though, must be supported by precise, detailed, and most importantly, accurate evidence. Anything less is not factual, but biased and irresponsible journalism of the worst kind.

Consider the W5 program on international students in Canada, broadcast on CTV nationwide last September. To actually show a program like this across Canada on what one assumes to be a reputable television network, is totally reprehensible. However, people make mistakes, and there was always the possibility that someone, somewhere, had made a gross error of judgment. Considering the ensuing controversy and overwhelming condemnation from across Canada, one would assume that the persons responsible would, at the very least, retract some of the more glaring errors made in the program.

Instead, W5 released a statement entitled "W5 Reply: Foreign Students in Canada."

Almost the only thing factual about this document is that it exists. It perpetuates the same distorted facts, misrepresentations, quotations taken out of context and complete falsehoods that were in the original program, and then adds some more!

Probably the most disturbing feature of the program and the "W5 Reply", is the attitude taken by W5 toward students of Chinese origin. Throughout both the program and the "W5 Reply", W5 implies that international students and Chinese are one and the same, despite the fact that there are far more Canadians of Chinese origin in Canadian universities than Chinese nationals from Hong Kong or elsewhere.

No-one denies that the largest proportion of international students are from Hong Kong (33%). However, Hong Kong is one of the most densely populated areas on earth and consequently has many more eligible university students than could possibly be accommodated at the territory's small university. Rich or poor, students must go abroad to receive a university education or forego one altogether.

Racial imbalance

W5 also selectively quotes out of context the "Report of the Task Force on Visiting International Students in Alberta" published one year ago by the U of A Senate, creating the impression that the report is opposed to Hong Kong students. This report fully supports an international student presence in Canada whether from Hong Kong or elsewhere, and uses a wealth of pertinent (and accurate!) facts and data to support its case. However they do acknowledge an "imbalance" in the large proportion of Hong Kong students, compared to those from other countries, which the "W5 Reply" quotes at length. The conclusion from this selective quoting is that the report fully concurs with the attitude of W5 toward

the Hong Kong student.

However, reading this portion of the report in its entirety gives an entirely different impression, particularly when one considers the concluding paragraphs:

"Not surprisingly, the (Hong Kong) student may find himself criticized for his adaptability, single mindedness and his academic achievements once he is on campus, which fact may well appear to him an injustice. After all what does one go to university for if not to study? . . .

... However, the Task Force does not feel that these characteristics should be penalized (my emphasis); nor do the majority of the Task Force members agree with the use of negative sanctions through quotas based on the country of origin, at this time, to improve the mix in the visa student population."

W5 saw no reason to quote any of this in their reply.

W5's imagination comes into its own with statistics, which they invent, distort or ignore. Not only are they often misleading and wrong, they even manage to contradict themselves. Consider, for example, the actual number of international students with student authorizations at Canadian universities.

At the beginning of the "W5 Reply" W5 claims a figure of 29,000 for the 1976 - 1977 period without quoting a source. Toward the end they quote a figure of 55,000 from the Director of Foreign Student Affairs of the Canadian Bureau of International Education (CBIE). They go on to quote Statistics Canada as saying "55,000 is unrealistically low."

However, the CBIE figure is actually 23,451 and the Statistics Canada figure 25,823. The figure of 55,000 attributed to CBIE is in fact a CBIE estimate of all international students in Canada at every level of education and as such represents a maximum.

Nowhere in the "W5 Reply" do they mention the figure of 100,000 used in the original program.

"Rich foreigners"

The "W5 Reply" repeatedly and correctly points out that there is a trend in Canada toward rich international students from developed countries. They support their contentions that increasingly large numbers of rich, "opportunistic" international students are benefitting from the largesse of the Canadian taxpayer by citing that 90% of Canada's international students are privately funded. The obvious implication is that 90% of Canada's international students are rich! However, 90% are "privately funded" because Canadian law stipulates that any students entering Canada must be self-supporting and show evidence of funds to support their stay in Canada. The exception (about 10%) are those on exchange or scholarships of one form or another.

Thus many of these "privately funded" students will have saved for years to avail themselves of an opportunity to study at a Canadian university. They will have about \$5,000 to live on for each year of their studies, either from the money brought with them or from teaching assistantships, if graduate students. Not only do they have to support themselves but in many cases a family as well. However, W5's international student is a product of their vivid imagination — a rich Chinese from Hong Kong with his exclusive private school education, milking the Canadian taxpayer and driving around in his Porsche.

\$5,000 does not go far when a minimum of \$1,000 goes on tuition fees. This is further compounded by differential tuition fees imposed by some provincial governments, not the universities, as claimed by W5, against international students. Despite all hardships, international students persevere and

return home to their countries with a valued Canadian education which will be of much more use than Canadian aid and will incur much less cost to the Canadian taxpayer. As far as W5 is concerned, this student does not exist, despite the evidence to the contrary.

W5 saves its most ludicrous statements for the end, in their comments on the Canadian Immigration Act as it applies to international students.

The following quotes from the "W5 Reply" illustrate this:

"(Admission) quotas only serve to convert visa students to landed immigrants. Once they've achieved landed immigrant status they can take any course they choose." "One Immigration official said our complicated 'point' system, nomination schemes, extended families and a lax attitude make it easy (for international students to become landed immigrants)."

Canada has one of the toughest immigration controls of any country. Virtually the only way for an inter-

ference to work upon completion of their baccalaureate. Consequently, valuable research which directly benefits Canada, is carried out by international students.

There is also a more tangible benefit to Canada. Far from milking the Canadian taxpayer, CBIE estimates that international students contribute \$62,000,000 annually to the Canadian economy.

What about Canadian international students? Canada Manpower estimated in a survey completed in 1973, that 57% of all Canadian Ph.Ds were obtained outside Canada. Until recently there were more Canadian graduate students outside Canada than in Canada. So do all W5's flights of fancy apply to these students too, or have they conveniently forgotten the time when the majority of Canadian graduate students studied abroad because in those days many Canadian graduate departments were inferior? Everything W5 says about international students in Canada could equally apply to Canadian students studying abroad.



This was the scene at CFRN studios in Edmonton when demonstrators marched peacefully, protesting W5's depiction of the foreign student situation.

national student to become a permanent resident is to obtain a validated offer of employment from a Canadian employer, i.e. the offer must be approved by Canada Manpower who have satisfied themselves that there is no Canadian willing or capable of doing the job.

Since an international student can only apply for work upon completion of his studies he or she would no longer be a threat to Canadian students in the unlikely event that permanent resident status was granted.

Any Canada Immigration office will confirm the above. Even then it can take a minimum of six months to become a permanent resident, and the application must be made from outside Canada.

Only about 1% of international students eventually become permanent residents and then only after the completion of their studies.

"Government policy makes it easy for people to become landed immigrants."

Such a quote is an absolute, unsubstantiated absurdity. W5 has shown a complete and total ignorance of the Canadian Immigration Act. It is virtually impossible for an international student to become a permanent resident. The act is so strict that an international student who wishes to change faculties or universities once in Canada, must obtain permission from the local immigration office. If his student authorization expires by even one day, he can be ordered to leave Canada.

W5 nowhere makes any mention of the benefits or even necessity of international students. Many graduate departments would barely exist were it not for the international students who fill the void due to Canadian students'

The author of the "W5 Reply" saves his best remark for the last:

"... and far more disturbing than accusations of inaccuracies in our facts, are attempts and threats to refer W5 to the CRTC and the Canadian Human Rights Commission to shut us up once and for all. It seems that freedom of speech is pretty low on the list of priorities these days."

How does one reply to such sanctimonious drivel? What does W5 think the Human Rights Commission is for? Freedom of speech presupposes that what is said is accurate and supported by evidence. It does not apply to deliberate attempts to manipulate, distort and misrepresent the true facts.

Various Chinese-Canadian groups, CBIE, Statistics Canada, the Minister of Employment and Immigration, the Association of University Teachers, the National Union of Students, and various universities have all formally complained to CTV. The University of Alberta is in the process of preparing a complaint. Yet, other than this "W5 Reply" nothing is forthcoming from CTV or W5, least of all a retraction. They insist on standing by the original program.

W5's next project will probably be a documentary, to the enlightenment of the few Canadians who appear to watch the program, that the moon is made of green cheese. The ensuing condemnation and ridicule from informed sources across Canada will be refuted outright by the use of the simple expedient that W5 were informed that the moon was indeed composed of green cheese and that is good enough for them. All these scientists obviously are just trying to shut W5 up because it contradicts their own views. Anyway, what about W5's freedom of speech?



This anti-W-5 button has proliferated in Edmonton