

# Looking to the university of the future

York University President H. Ian Macdonald speaking to the Association of Commonwealth Universities in Hong Kong:

Since the birth rate in almost all industrialized countries is falling dramatically, we are faced now with a labor force that is getting progressively older. Under these conditions, it is becoming increasingly clear that a great deal of retraining will be necessary in the labor force. As a vehicle for adaptive training, the university must be at the forefront to assist in that process.

We must be prepared to get the best out of the people we have, and be prepared to match skills to opportunities. Through the educational system, we can provide the degree of retraining and continuing education which will make it possible for us both to fulfil our employment requirements and to satisfy the legitimate desires and demands of the current generation. This will require the provision of degree and non-degree programs to meet the changes in society's demands for:

- a broader education for those who received a narrow technical training and wish to expand their educational base and change their roles;
- upgrading in competence and perspective for people faced

with early obsolescence of their knowledge of skills;

- regular updating for professionals (teachers, planners, environmentalists, lawyers, managers, etc.);

- the introduction to new technical developments in science, management, law, planning and other fields.

Individuals should be given the opportunity at all points, during their lifetime, to find a new occupation that taxes their abilities and their innate capacity. This is where economic policy and education come closely together. In order to solve our unemployment problems, I believe it is essential first to create a sense of security among individuals so that hanging on at all costs to a job and obstructing technological progress is folly for all concerned.

However, in order to allay the fear of unemployment, we must be capable of ensuring that such individuals have the opportunity for new and fulfilling occupations. Thus, it is our responsibility to see that educational policy is following the movements and changing behavior of society.

Although the primary emphasis will remain on the full-time enrolment of students, the increasing tendency toward the part-time student who also has employment or family com-

mitments is characteristic throughout the world. This is understandable as university education becomes more of a lifetime experience, rather than a post-secondary school progression.

Continuing education will be increasingly important, as more people who were denied an opportunity at one time in their lives will have a second or third chance. As part-time study becomes more and more prominent in the university, the university, in turn, must then adapt its procedures radically to cope with changing styles and expectations.

We must be prepared to take the university to students as well as taking students to the university. Education at the workplace, on weekends, and by the electronic media will be the harbingers of the future.

One other significant role for the universities of the industrialized countries is to be found in their responsibility to Third World development. Through a variety of arrangements, we have a rich experience in the provision of technical and professional training as well as general education for students from Third World countries in the developed nations.

However, there remains the need for greatly expanded ex-

change of faculty between universities in the developed and developing nations as well as for exchange of data, information, research materials, joint projects and publications, and so on.

Not only would these exchanges aid the developing countries, but they would greatly enhance the universities in the

developed nations by giving our faculty first-hand knowledge about other countries, their people and their cultures. It would also offer an opportunity for "mid-career" enrichment and enable the contributing universities to support a much larger over-all faculty complement, within constrained budgets.



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