



from Teaching about Life in the City

cure

For the last decade or two education has been oversold as a cure for all ills and a protection against all hazards. The result has been an educational system of elaborate growth and vast expenditure. Now, critical scrutiny of the educational system and its cost is being brought to bear at all levels. There is increasing suspicion (not entirely without cause) that the investment is not altogether well managed. In the face of the other needs and priorities of society, faith in the powers of education is losing some of its force. As a result, an insistent pressure for "relevance" is coming from society and government. This is not the cry for "relevance" which the commission senses as the voice of students calling for changes in teacher behaviour. It is the more insistent and insidious pressure for governments to intervene and make decisions concerning universities, decisions which in the past, governments have neither wished nor presumed to make.

the academic staff association

student mix

On page 84, the Report recommends that the University of Alberta focus on senior undergraduate and graduate studies. Nowhere does the Commission go on to explain why it feels this policy is desirable. Such a policy if implemented, will have a major impact on the University. A few possible results can be listed:

i) undergraduates, who would increasingly come from 2 year college programmes, might have less training in learning resource access, possibly suffering under the tutelage of less qualified staff, thereby ending up in a situation of lesser academic excellence. But they would be spared, by and large, the alienation endemic to a large impersonal institution.

ii) community colleges, with increased student loads, would require additional staff. Correspondingly, graduate student support at the University, now largely derived from assisting in the teaching of lower undergraduate courses, would decline, reducing teaching experience as well for graduate students.

iii) senior undergraduate courses cost more per student than the lower. Reduction or elimination of lower undergraduate courses and the revenue associated with them would change the financial status, if not the structure, of the University.

iv) physical facilities, such as large lecture halls, designed for high-enrollment lower undergraduate courses, would be unused or under-used with the elimination of these courses from the University's curricula.

v) as the teaching function declines, research would increasingly come to dominate the University.

Of all these results, the Worth Commission considers only the last-in one sentence! We find it inconceivable that the Commission would recommend a major policy change with no convincing rationale or attempt to assess the results of new policy. To argue that lower undergraduates should be kept forever at the University of Alberta, on the other hand, would repeat the Commission's error of basing policy recommendations on feeling rather than on in-depth study. *Until* reasons and results are seriously assessed, the University's student mix should remain as it is.

the graduate students' association

tenure

the graduate students' association

Tenure: As the Worth Commission did, we recognize that problems such as unaccountability and obsolescence can occur under the tenure system, not to speak of non-productive staff. However, *nowhere* do we find the Commission seriously grappling with the problem of academic freedom and reasonable job security. The Worth Report calls for sweeping periodic reviews of academic appointments, but does not delineate who reviews and what standards will apply.

G.S.A. remains concerned therefore, about the question of academic freedom for all staff and students. By their history and very nature post-secondary institutions frequently engage individuals who critically eye various aspects of society. We feel this criticism is essential and beneficial to society. Before *tenure* is done away with, we ask the Worth Commission to detail how it would protect this criticarole, not with vague assurances of freedom but in concrete terms. G.S.A. is not wedded to the current tenure system, but is whole-heartily wedded to the principle of academic freedom.

the academic staff association

As a professional group we are primarily employed as teachers and researchers. Unlike other organizations of teachers, however, there is no "credential" or certificate required by our members in order to become university professors. In effect, actions of the universities through their employment practices determine our membership. The determination of the membership of our profession is, therefore, a matter over which we have no control and only indirect influence.

It is in recognition of the right of university boards of governors to determine who shall teach, and by extension, who shall not teach that the academic profession has placed great emphasis on academic freedom. Given the assigned task of the profession to search for and disseminate knowledge no matter how unpopular the dissemination of that knowledge may be, and to increase critical understanding no matter whom this criticism may affect; and given the absence of direct influence on the hiring and firing policies of boards of governors, security of employment in the face of potential exigencies has been a paramount concern of organizations of academics. In order to protect the academic from arbitrary action, associations of academics have emphasized the need for appointment and dismissal procedures at universities which ensure teachers of due process including where necessary, the impartial and knowledgeable arbitration of disputes in cases involving security of employment. These policies have resulted in the doctrine known in the abstract as tenure, perhaps the most misunderstood and misrepresented word in the lexicon of academia.

Contrary to one popular misconception, tenure was not designed to protect the incompetent. It was designed to provide for a professor allegedly incompetent the due process and security that the Commission suggests are necessary for whatever procedures are devised for universities. . . .

the students' union

"The Commission proposes that tenure be abolished"

We agree with the comments contained in the report regarding sabbatical leave. For some time now we have felt that this matter should be the subject of some open discussion. While we do not argue the concept of periodic leave for the purpose of updating qualification, etc., we question the present system of year-long sabbaticals on full salary.

One of the most important items in the report as far as the Students' Union is concerned is the item dealing with tenure. Unfortunately, the Commission chose this item to demonstrate its

tendency to sweeping generalizations. A better case should and could have been made for the abolition of tenure. As it is the commission does recommend the abolition of tenure.

We do not intend to dwell too much on this topic in these observations. Instead we will be submitting a brief on tenure to the General Faculties Council of the University of Alberta in order that the whole question of tenure may be discussed.

Suffice it to say that we hope if the university does not put its own house in order on this particular issue that the government will take action.

teaching

the graduate students' association

Technology and Education: The Commission both calls for and hails the application of electronic educational devices in the learning process. We recognize the value of the goal, but would add a few cautions. Even though technological revolution has tended to create its own set of problems as it solves others-educational technology will be different.

The goals of education, as the Commission has identified are many and complex. Technology is most useful in developing student mastery, but less useful in the development of critical thinking, a process which still requires interpersonal contact. We urge therefore, that technology be viewed as a *tool* in the educational process. Misuse of this tool at the university level will serve to heighten feelings of alienation and reduce development of critical thinking.

A second caution concerning educational technology is a financial one. Electronic teaching devices have high initial capital costs against which their effectiveness must be measured. Cost/benefit studies are notably scarce in the field-nevertheless, such studies will be necessary as expenditures for teaching technology increase. In summary, electronic technology will be neither cheap nor an all-purpose tool in Alberta educational strategy. Furthermore, such items should be assessed before implementation in light of proven long term learning benefits.

The Report upholds two basic philosophic principles. It espouses, both explicitly and implicitly, the deliberate selection of a set of values and beliefs which would result in a "person-centred society." To those of us involved in teaching it exhorts us to honour each learner's "private agenda:" it is the individual's responsibility to choose and to learn. *But the Report also explicitly forecasts and implicitly advocates a technology enabling those who program the means whereby the technology utilized and who select the ends to which the means are put to control human behaviour and manage personality.* Without explicitly endorsing its forecast that governments will play a major regulatory role in interpersonal and inter-group relations, the tone and tenor of the subsequent discussion implicitly indicate not only the inevitability but the desirability of such regulation.

The simultaneous adoption of the contradictory principles results in imprecision and confusion. We admit to frustration in reacting to this discussion on the processes of teaching and learning. The report exhorts us to preserve our function as critics of society while recommending that we be subject to the "enlightened sovereignty of the people" and to planning groups "at all levels" who "may have decided major goals, objectives, identified content and recommended teaching approaches." Within this framework the report challenges us to cease being "relative passive neutral devices" for cultural indoctrination in order that we may express our "full humanistic while at the same time reducing our "traditional idiosyncratic influence" in developing our own

