

Bladen Defends Per Capita.. ...Asks Doubled Student Aid

The Bladen Report favours "free education" for graduate students but not for undergraduates.

The Bladen Commission is a non-governmental group set up by the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC), headed by Dean Bladen of the University of Toronto, it released its long-awaited report in Ottawa Oct. 6.

Undergraduate fees are expected to remain at an average of \$500, according to the report, because federal operating grants to universities should be increased two-and-a-half fold immediately.

"The graduate student should be fully, or almost fully, supported" by grants of at least \$2,000 in order to "attract into the graduate schools enough students of high calibre to meet the needs of universities, government, and business."

No such attempt to influence enrolment is recommended for the undergraduate level, however. The report makes no judgment as to desirable levels of undergraduate enrolment. It takes the AUCC predictions as "the best estimate we have of the rising demand" of students for undergraduate education.

To allow this demand to be met, the report recommends that governments give priority to capital grants and bursaries, and "resist the popular pressure for the abolition of fees."

Defining "free education" to include tuition, expenses, and foregone earnings, the report suggests that its projected enrolments can be achieved without free education, and expresses anxiety that greater demands would not meet with success. These projections predict that the present rate of 9.2 students per population in the 18 to 24 age group will rise to 13.2 by 1970 and 15.7 by 1975.

"There is a danger of friction" the report says, "between those who do not attend university and those who do, if the former feel they are paying the latter to live better and to achieve higher status."

BOB RABINOVITCH

After reading the Report of the Commission on the Financing of Higher Education in Canada, I am forced to express my disappointment and disillusionment with its contents. This report had been expected with great anticipation, for although it was to be a report of a committee of the Canadian Universities Foundation, it had been hoped that the Bladen Commission would rise above this potentially limiting context and exert leadership in solving the great problems facing higher education in Canada today, and for the coming decade.

Unfortunately the Bladen Commission has not fulfilled the promise and the report brought down by this Commission can only at best be classified as a status quo report.

It is a status quo report because it does not attempt to analyse or to help solve some of the most basic problems facing the development of education in this country. Rather, it is satisfied with a mere expansion of the existing per capita grant system. All this does in effect is help perpetuate the existing barriers to universal accessibility to higher education. This system is content with meeting normal expansion of demand for higher education as has been projected by Edward Sheffield. It does not attempt to analyse to any degree of satisfaction the problem of the comparatively low percentage of the college age population that is attending university in Canada as compared to that attending universities in the United States.

If one reads the Report carefully, one is left with the impression that no sociological, psychological, or even financial barriers presently exist to the undertaking of higher education. It would seem that the sole problem facing higher education in Canada is the problem of financing the normal growth of demand for education. Although this is recognized as a serious problem and although the Commission is to be complimented for its thorough analysis of this problem, nevertheless the major problem facing education in Canada is the loss of brainpower to this country as a consequence of the incomplete development of human potential. If we are to maintain the age of growth that the Economic Council of Canada has suggested is necessary, if we are to maintain the rate of growth to which the Commission pays lip service in its introductory chapter, then what is needed is a "supply of highly intelligent, highly trained, and highly educated people." (Report, p. 2) As the annual report on the Economic Council of Canada has stated, "The potential Canadian economy we visualize for 1970 is a high standard of living, and a high employment economy, and it must therefore be a high education economy, a high resource mobility economy, . . ."

arising from our discussions of the economics of the problem, for some use of the price mechanism and against completely free education". Although completely free education is a contentious issue, his corollary that the tuition fee must remain as shocking. His rationale, that to ask the government to absorb the tuition fee might in effect jeopardize the programme he has presented, is most absurd since the retention of tuition fees maintains the status quo.

Although coached in economic terms, Dean Bladen's insistence on "resisting popular pressure" is based solely on the above mentioned fear. As Dean Bladen has said, "the case against free tuition and against free education, tuition plus stipend, is then essentially based on an anxiety to achieve the full expansion we have proposed." Herein lies the crux of the matter. This report is not at all interested in those that are not attending university but rather is solely interested in the maintenance of the university plant in its present condition.

On pages 64 to 65 of the Report, Dean Bladen has given a most brilliant defence of free education at the graduate level. Dean Bladen seems to be suggesting a unique educational system in which education is free until the end of the secondary level; students are then forced to pay for the next four years; and if the student continues, he again receives free education. Is Dean Bladen thus suggesting that only the education undertaken at the undergraduate level is not of benefit to society? Is he also suggesting that the undergraduate is the only one who can afford to pay for education? It is at the undergraduate level that the student is hit by the full brunt of foregone earnings for the first time. It is at the undergraduate level that a truly voluntary decision to continue education must be made. At no other period in educational development are there more sociological and psychological deterrents to the affirmative education decision. It is at this level that Dean Bladen wishes to maintain what many economists and educators believe a most serious barrier to higher education — the tuition fee. Dean Bladen's defence of this antiquated institution is irrational and unacceptable. Canada needs more undergraduates as much as it needs more and more graduate students. One of the most excellent defences of the case for the elimination of the tuition fee and the case against loan and bursary



John Young explaining yet another esoteric part of Accounting and Commerce. (Dal Photo)

A Critique of the Bladen Report

In dealing with the increased needs of universities for funds, the report notes the criticism submitted by some Maritime universities that per capita grants failed to meet costs of provinces with a higher than average ratio of students to population. It was also pointed out that they took no account of inequality of income between provinces.

Defending the per capita system, the report says that it is up to each province to decide how far to expand higher education, and that special fiscal needs should be met by general equalization grants.

In summation, the major recommendations of the Bladen Commission are:

- * an increase of federal per capita operating grants to universities from \$2.00 to \$5.00, effective this academic year.
- * a doubling of student aid, with more emphasis on bursaries than loans.
- * provincial governments should "resist the popular pressure for the abolition of fees."
- * graduate students should be given "generous support" to pay all their expenses.
- * government scholarships based on merit should be limited to \$250.00.
- * federal capital grants of \$5.00 per capita, to meet 50 per cent of the capital costs of universities "excluding residences and student activity buildings."
- * provinces should establish "Grants Commissions" with strong academic representation, to divide all operating and capital grants among universities.
- * that all federal funds to higher education be distributed under provincial control.
- * that one Minister of the federal cabinet be assigned to coordinate all federal assistance to universities.

The recommendations contained in the Report are not designed to help achieve this increase in

growth but are designed merely to maintain our present system of education with its obvious unfair, unequal, undemocratic, level of opportunity to participate in the process by the population at large.

Furthermore, it has been suggested by the Robbins Committee that "if in any country educational investment in general and investment in higher education in particular falls appreciably behind what is undertaken elsewhere, then, in the long run, general earning power is liable to be affected far beyond anything that we may have foregone in the way of pecuniary return on investment in the individuals concerned." The Bladen Report does not make any attempt to narrow the gap that presently exists with respect to the number of people undertaking education in Canada and U.S. If we accept the premise suggested by Dean Bladen that education is a most important factor in the growth of the gross national product, as indeed we do accept this premise, are we then, as Canadians, doomed to the role of a second class nation with respect to our American neighbor?

Furthermore, if Denison's estimate that over 43% of the rate of growth can be attributed to education proves accurate, then we must conclude that the differential in the standard of living between Canada and the U.S. is predetermined to increase.

However, this need not be the case if we as Canadians have the courage to undertake the massive reforms presently necessary in education. Unfortunately the Bladen Commission has refused to accept the responsibility of leading this revolution but is instead merely satisfied with token reforms that merely perpetuate the status quo. Although we fully endorse total academic freedom of students and professors, the university must be at the service of the nation, rather than the nation at the service of the university as is implied by the Bladen Report.

Dean Bladen's chapter on the economics of Education and in particular his attempt at developing a rationale for the maintenance of the tuition fee is most disappointing. For in many ways chapter 5 represents a rejection of an increased rate of growth that was so forcefully propounded in the first chapter.

Dean Bladen contends that "there is still a very strong case

for the maintenance of the tuition fee and the case against loan and bursary

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