

The U and Dr. Worth

the young socialists



from *Teaching about Life in the City, National Council for the Social Studies*

up against the wall

max wyman

"Students are adults and cannot assume that parents should help them through university." This is the response of Max Wyman, president of the U of A, to the Worth Commission suggestion that parents should contribute as best they can to their son's or daughter's education. The Commission recommends that fees be raised so that wealthy families will pay more while students from poorer families can receive grants or loans. "It would take an army of processors to determine the amount any particular parent should pay," Wyman protests.

Wyman also objects to the claim that tenure should be abolished. Short term contracts would be unworkable because of the reviewing time necessary. The only workable method, in Wyman's opinion, is the present one, a system of permanent contracts with dismissal procedures.

"Tenure does protect academic freedom," Wyman said. "It is misunderstood and maligned—people think it is guarding incompetent and redundant professors. Truly, it insures job security so that there are no dismissals without due process and fair hearing, a concept which is recommended by Worth. It is an important protection as seekers of truth must be able to criticize without fear of being fired."

Worth's proposal that the U of A become a senior and professional institution is vague, in Wyman's opinion. "Already we have more students in the third and fourth years and graduate programmes than in the first two years. If the proposal were rigidly imposed—no first or second year at all—it would be neither desirable nor feasible. There is already the staff and the facilities for six to seven thousand junior students. It would mean that building elsewhere and rehiring was necessary and for no good reason."

Although he agrees that

student job counselling must be available, Wyman sees the coordination of enrollment with the employment market as potentially dangerous. "In directing students to certain areas the university would be basing its advice on prophecy and could easily be wrong. If the federal government were to control the job market and specify entrance quotas for various faculties, it would become duty bound to provide those jobs at a later time. This would mean no freedom of choice and would be similar to communist countries—the final decision must rest with the student.

Like the Worth Commission, Wyman sees a problem in the transfer of credits from one Alberta college and university to another. But unlike the commission, he does not think the problem can be solved simply by accepting students records without question. Wyman maintains that the "receiving institution needs the right to assess students.

Nonetheless, he sees no difficulty in doing away with departmental examinations. In fact, he hopes that they will not be replaced by entrance exams. The university would merely accept the recommendations of high schools.



WALTER WORTH

from *School Progress*

The object of any government report should be to analyze correctly a given situation, make recommendations in the interest of the people that the government is supposed to serve, and then explain the analysis and recommendations to the people in a clear concise straight forward way. In this your report fails. You speak in glowing terms of such things as universal accessibility implying that you are recommending to the Alberta Government the means by which they can make education further serve the needs and desires of students and the population in general. Over the past decade or so even more and more people have come to realize that education is a right - not a privilege. We see this report as a part of a bi-national trend within Canada and Quebec. As the governments are trying to explain things like denials of just wage demands, spiraling prices; a foreign dominated, war-inflated economy; exorbitant military spending; and inequitable taxation - the people of this province and of the entire country are less and less likely to accept restricting of the right to something as basic and crucial as education. If governments find it desirable to do this - they must approach it cautiously: clothe their attempts in the garb of expanding, humanizing, and promoting education. This is just what the report attempts to do, as a part of a series of such reports at all levels of government across Canada from the federal "Peitchinis Report" to Ontario's "Wright Report".

The fact is that the so-called "quality of education" is being undermined by budget cuts that mean that staff, equipment and facilities are to be stretched even thinner than they are at present. Capitalism wants education to be as profitable as possible at the least cost; to turn out the necessary number and type of scientists, technicians, teachers and so on. The past ten to twenty years have seen technical and scientific advances and along with them a corresponding opening up and expansion of the universities. Since capitalists are occupied with other things as well as this "overhead expense of human resource development" and since this "boom" is levelling off - largely because such capital expenditure can not be renewed frequently and still remain profitable - the demand for graduates is dwindling. As in many fields, capitalism has a tendency (because it is irrational, unplanned and involves a cumbersome administration) to "over-produce". It is no wonder that the federal government admits in its "Federal Government Report on Youth" that youth unemployment (presently in excess of 10%) is becoming a permanent feature of the Canadian economy, and that there are tens of thousands of unemployed highschool, college and university graduates from engineers to teachers. Last year there were 41% fewer jobs available for university graduates and 24% fewer available for community college graduates.

You call the entire situation a "crisis in education", but how do you propose to solve these problems? As a government established and financed operation, you go to

great lengths to draw attention away from the general economic picture and the role that the government has played in creating the inequality which you must admit exists with post-secondary and advanced education. We can speculate fairly accurately about whose interests the government really represents in this case despite its continued harping about "the poor taxpayer". I'm sure that if the party in power, be it Social Credit or Conservative, would open its books to public scrutiny, we would not find that a substantial portion of their funding came from the average student or working person!

Most importantly your report recommends, IN THE INTERESTS OF EQUITY, increasing the financial responsibility placed upon the individual university student to cover 25% of program costs rather than the present 13%. This would have the effect of doubling most students' fees. You state, using one of the most blatant and insulting examples of double-talk ever to appear in a government report.

"By shifting a major portion of the financial burden for higher education from students and their families to tax-payers in general provides a greater opportunity for equity. But, at the same time, tax-payers include many low income earners who are less able to pay taxes than higher education students and their parents. The result is that the poor end up subsidizing the schooling of the rich. To compensate for this inequity, student fees in higher education should be raised." What does all of this really mean? First of all you say that to alter the present situation so as to shift more financial burden on to the students would be unjust because it would cut across post-secondary education for lower income groups. The only alternative that you pose to this is to shift the responsibility to the general populace as taxpayers which would include those same lower income people who could not afford to pay in the first place, which is likewise unfair. Therefore you say that to make up for this unfairness we must resort to the original injustice! It is vicious to say that those who are poor shall not receive an education simply because they cannot afford to pay.

Far from being written in our interests, your report is an attack on students and the few rights and advantages that we do at present have. Nowhere do you talk about democratizing the institutions of learning in this province. Nowhere do you project a loan and grant structure that has *proven* itself to meet the needs of students. In Ontario the loan and grant structure, that was instituted along with the fee increase there and that makes promises similar to those you make, has proven itself only to be inadequate. Nowhere do you propose or defend institutions such as University of Alberta Health Services (which is presently threatened by budget cuts) which are obviously in the interests of students. Instead you lament that the Separate School Board cannot be extended further into rural areas when it is an institution that propagates the archaic notion of religious-centered education for students who have no choice or say in the matter, while at the same time using and wasting public funds in much needless duplication of services. You propose continuing the present grant system for private schools and extol them as great pace setters for the rest of us -- the less fortunate. Public funding of private and separate schools should be ended in favor of extending and improving the public school system.

Are your recommendations really in the interests of universal accessibility -- are they really in the interests of students? Your report is a cynical, deceitful fraud -- a piece of propaganda meant to disguise, rationalize and justify the status quo in the interests of big business.

We say that the cut-backs must be halted immediately. The institutions of education must be run in the interests of those whose lives and futures are most directly affected by them -- the students. Rather than serve the interests of big business, the institutions of education must serve the needs of the majority: working people, women, native people, farmers, Québécois.

We demand, and are prepared to help organize students to fight for, an end to education cut-backs.

TAX CORPORATE PROFITS, NOT STUDENTS!

