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In line with our efforts to provide the membership of CUASA with a maximum of background information before the General Meeting on FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 10th, 1984 12:30 - 1:30 p.m. in THEATRE 'B', we are reprinting the following article which appeared in the current issue of the York University Faculty Association Newsletter.

SOME POPULAR MYTHS ABOUT THE STEPHENSON COMMISSION

courtesy of Janice Newson, President/YUFA

On December 15th, Dr. Bette Stephenson announced the appointment of a three person commission to restructure the university system. In her speech to the legislature, she outlined a blueprint for this restructuring. The blueprint is remarkably similar to the famous "option three" outlined in 1981 by the Fisher Commission - the option referred to by Fisher commissioners as the "disaster scenario".

Since Stephenson's announcement, a number of myths have been circulating on university campuses and in the media. The common ones are these:

THE MYTH: "...we have nothing to fear!"

THE REALITY: *Stephenson said, "...fundamental changes may be necessary to some or all of the institutions".

*The appointment of a Commission to implement a designated plan for the restructuring is an unprecedented step in the history of government-university relations in the province.

*The blueprint of Stephenson's plan has neither been debated in the legislature nor formally submitted for comment to the duly appointed advisory body (OCUA) concerned with university-government relations.

*Over recent years many briefs and written submissions have provided rational and carefully constructed critiques of various aspects of Stephenson's plan. She is well aware of her opposition and the weaknesses of her proposals. She is proceeding, through the Commission, in spite of it.

THE MYTH: "...the Commission gives us an opportunity to make known our strengths."

THE REALITY: *A recent meeting of faculty association representatives from every university in the province revealed that each university is confident of its unique strengths and its ability to defend its own case for continuing as it is. Nonetheless, the Commission is mandated to produce a restructuring plan. Among other things, the plan will achieve the specialization of universities; the creation of a powerful, central body to make decisions now made by Boards of Governors, Presidents, Senates, Faculty Councils and Departments; and a clarification of student access to universities based on "economic realities and social needs".

*Whatever the strengths of universities in the province, the newly structured system will be supported at no more than the existing funding levels.

*The Commission was instructed not to engage in conceptual debate, but rather, to produce an "operational plan" based on existing reports, data and policy papers. To date the Commission has not been instructed to receive (therefore pay attention to) any information - let alone, new information - from the university community. (A recent lead of information suggests that the Commission may announce its intention to issue a tentative draft some time in March to receive comment from the public.)

THE MYTH: "...we should cooperate with the Commission, try to influence its work, and make sure it produces a result we can live with... ."

THE FULL TEXT OF THE MINISTER'S
SPEECH IS REPRINTED IN THE
SPECIAL JANUARY ISSUE OF THE
OCUFA FORUM.



...over

THE REALITY: *Stephenson clearly represented the commission as a "short-term intervention by government into the planning" of the university system. The authority of the normal decision-making bodies of universities has been suspended, allegedly on a temporary basis. Cooperation from the outset with this commission concedes the legitimacy of this intervention, accepts the terms of its mandate and by implication, seriously impedes the ability to challenge its final results.

*The commission has not been given a free hand to propose any structural changes that will enhance universities' objectives or serve the interests of the public. Instead, it has been given a set of criteria on which to base a design: namely, the specialization of institutions, cooperation between the university and the business community to aid economic recovery, an access policy that reflects economic reality and social needs and greater mobility of faculty members. Cooperation with this commission implies agreement with some or all of their criteria.

THE MYTH: "This is just another commission. It won't get anywhere."

THE REALITY: *Stephenson concluded her speech in this way - "The government commits itself to the implementation of a renewed university system founded upon the decisions and directions determined by the Commission".

Several reasons can be suggested for the circulation, indeed, the popularity of these myths. The benign possibilities are these - the failure to read carefully the text of Stephenson's speech, a lack of awareness about the political context of her decision, the desire not to alarm people, and the desire not to appear to be intimidated.

However, if the Stephenson plan, or some version of it, is put into effect, many if not all universities in the province will be fundamentally changed in the foreseeable future, both in terms of the programmes they offer as well as in terms of the way decisions are made. Many if not all employees of universities - in professional and managerial positions, in support and maintenance positions, and in academic positions - will experience significant alterations in their working conditions and status over the course of their working life. Many if not all students will encounter, to a greater or lesser degree, limitations in opportunities to pursue the courses of study they are capable of pursuing.

University presidents and faculty association leaders have the responsibility to alert the university community to the possible implications of Stephenson's most recent maneuver. Now is not the time for calming anxieties with mythologies. Now is the time for speaking some truth!

The most dangerous myth of all is this - "we can't do anything!"
The reality is - we can resist!

OCUFA TEACHING AWARDS

CUASA has received teaching award pamphlets and guidelines from OCUFA for the 1983 OCUFA Teaching Awards. Copies of these have been sent to the Deans of the faculties and CUASA has a few left for distribution on a first come first served basis. Please call the office at 6387 if you require a copy of the pamphlet and/or guidelines.

ACCOMODATION WANTED

CUASA has received the following letter:

I am an Associate Professor in Mathematics who expects to spend the '84-'85 academic year at Carleton. I am therefore interested in the possibility of renting accomodation for the period Sept.'84-Aug.'85 (or as much of this period as possible), preferably that of a Carleton faculty member on leave.

I would be accompanied by my wife and our two daughters (aged 17 and 25). We would prefer a private dwelling close to Carleton and at least partially furnished.

Anyone interested in providing accomodation as outlined above should contact:

J.D. Hiscocks
Department of Mathematical Sciences
University of Lethbridge
Lethbridge :: ALBERTA
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I N S U R A N C E

Bob Jones is on campus TUESDAYS and WEDNESDAYS from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. and is located in the CUASA Office - Room 447 St. Patrick's Building.

You can reach Bob by phone at 4310 (Tuesdays and Wednesdays)

1-800-267-7996 (other times)

This information is printed on the inside cover of your CUASA Calendar as well as on the inside back cover of the Staff Directory.