

Nova Scotia. Report of the Royal Commission on Education, Public Services and Provincial-Municipal Relations. Volume 3: Education, Part K: The Universities. Halifax: Queen's Printer, 1974.

This 300-page report on Nova Scotia's universities is set in the context of four volumes, sixty-five chapters, sixteen appendices and some sixty-nine hundred pages. These comprise the report of the Royal Commission which was established in March of 1971 to look into the planning and provision for education, health, social services, housing, and the administration of justice in Nova Scotia. Under the chairmanship of John F. Graham, Professor of Economics at Dalhousie University, it tabled its report in mid 1974. This report, which included over 1,400 recommendations, was truly an awesome task accomplished in a minimum of time. Directed at community leaders in a province "where political culture tends to support the status quo," the report aims to convince these leaders that the present system in Nova Scotia can only provide sub-standard services, and that to revitalize these services the province must assume the responsibility that is now split between local and provincial governments.

This volume, which deals with universities, in part loses from the commission's wide-ranging mandate, for, with so much else to look at, the committee didn't have the time or staff to study universities in their depth of uniqueness. The commission is content to say: "While many of the standard statistical measures put Nova Scotian universities far down on the list, we are more inclined to look at the long-standing reputations of many of our institutions. . . ." Perhaps, if one of the three commissioners had come from outside Nova Scotia, some form of comparative Canadian statistics or some such criteria as those contained in Allan M. Cartter's *An Assessment of Quality in Graduate Education* would have been used. Despite the softness of much social science data, surely their judicious use would have proved illuminating for this province.

This report in part gains from the wide context in which it is set in that the commission has been able to relate universities to much of the environment in which they operate. It is an interesting report to read, and manages also to incorporate a good overview of the literature and thought of higher education both in this country and abroad over the past several years. Its thirty-two recommendations on the university are thought-provoking, as they call for the Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission to hold institutions of higher education in Nova Scotia accountable in depth for their use of public funds. They would also have the province contribute directly to institutions in support of the research and scholarly activities carried on by the institutions. They recommend too that the individual student bear the full instructional cost of his education, with the help of an extended programme of student assistance. It should be noted here that the report cautions the province not to attempt to implement this last recommendation until other provinces have agreed to adopt similar systems, lest there occur a serious loss of students to universities in other provinces. In this regard it is interesting to observe that the recent *Report of the Task Force on Post-Secondary Education in Manitoba* recommends ". . . that there be no substantial increase in tuition levels for post-secondary students."

Despite the plethora of such reports as this which are being issued by so many jurisdictions, the outstanding dilemma of much of the sixties and of the seventies still remains with us. How do we reconcile the maintenance of university quality with the concept of

easy accessibility to these same universities? Until this is resolved, we shall stay at cross-purposes within the university, and we shall, therefore, continue to face an inevitable lack of understanding and consequent support without.

Thomas F. O'Connell  
Director of Libraries  
York University