

what he preaches when commenting on the actors in his drama. He deals chiefly with two Presidents, Claude Bissell and John Evans. Of Bissell as a person he has the highest opinion, but he makes it quite clear that he thinks he made a fundamental error when, instead of undertaking to reform the machinery existing in 1958, he went for a total change and a unicameral system of government. Of Evans he says less, but he permits himself the phrase, "what can only be described as the reign of John Evans and Donald Forster" (page 63). The only people he speaks of with real distaste are the student "revolutionaries" of 1967-74 – not the reformers, but the would-be destroyers. Set down in cold type today, the "disruptions" of those years make extraordinary reading, and it is hard to avoid recalling that many members of the university faculty then felt that Evans and his associates were prepared to go to almost any length to avoid confrontation with the dissidents.

This is not a book for the "general reader". Its format – typescript photographically reproduced – is difficult, and not everyone wants to follow the detailed stages through which the long and acrimonious discussion that produced the new Governing Council proceeded, but the audience to which it is addressed can hardly fail to find it fascinating. Mr. Ross deals mainly with university government, and says less about purely academic subjects, including the abolition of the honour courses in the Faculty of Arts and Science which was one of the great disasters at the University of Toronto in this period. In doing what he has done he has performed a notable public service, and it should be added that the University of Toronto – not, be it noted, the University of Toronto Press – deserves much credit for making what he has written available to the public. If a complete modern history of the university is ever written, its author or authors will be grateful.

This is a story of decline and fall. But it is only one chapter. Mr. Ross observes sadly that the University of Toronto is no longer the "great good place" of which Claude Bissell once wrote. But he is not wholly pessimistic; if the members and governing bodies of the institution do their duty, there can still be a great future. Problems abound, but signs of hope are not entirely lacking. With a better social atmosphere prevailing, a new President may be able to put the University's feet on the Long Road Up.

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A Review of *The Great Brain Robbery, Canada's Universities on the Road to Ruin* by David J. Bercuson, Robert Bothwell, and J.L. Granatstein, McClelland and Stewart, Toronto, 1984.

Canadian universities are subjected to a great deal of questioning and pressures by society and government as reflected in the numerous and recent articles ranging from Reader's Digest, Maclean's and Saturday Night and throughout the

hearings of both the MacDonald Royal Commission and Ontario's Bovey Commission on the Future Development of the Universities. In this sense, it is ironic that three university historians: David J. Bercuson, (Calgary), Robert Bothwell (Toronto), and J.L. Granatstein (York), have written, from the inside, a 160 page book exploring what is wrong with Canadian universities.

The Great Brain Robbery – Canada's Universities on the Road to Ruin appears to be a Canadian version of a similar book (Education and Jobs: The Great Training Robbery) which was published in the United States a few years ago and derives its appealing and provocative title from the British heist, "The Great Train Robbery". The title forecasts a polemical and contentious discussion of some of the critical issues Canadian universities are facing. The tone is flamboyant and passionate and their style of writing is distinguished by clarity and flair. Consequently, it has caught the attention of the media, and seems to legitimize some of the perceived weaknesses of Canada's universities. The book addresses the alleged decline in the quality of university education, the supermarket nature of curricula, the democratization of the universities' governing bodies, unionization of faculty, the role of tenure and the publish or perish syndrome. It attacks academic credibility of interdisciplinary programs ranging from Canadian and Women Studies to Northern and Urban Studies as well as enrolment driven underfunding of universities and their size.

Some illustrations indicate the tone and style of the presentation; "As it now exists at most universities in Canada, senate structure is an impediment to excellence and a stimulant to mediocrity." (p. 54); "Today, Canadian universities let almost everyone in who wants to get in" (p. 64), which is an inaccurate observation for the present. "The prime cause of grade inflation in universities today is familiarity, in many classes students and professor have become buddies" (p. 80-81), a rather naive and trivial view of faculty-student relations; "And yet Canada's universities are sliding ever more deeply into mediocrity..." (p. 147). No scientific evidence is supplied for the statements that the quality of university education has deteriorated, and the illustration cited for the University of Calgary has been proven inaccurate.

The authors treat complex issues in a simplistic manner and frequently overstate their arguments. The main thrust of the book is an advocacy to return to the 1950's with an elitist perception of the university community without realization of the 'social, economic and ideological' forces that shaped the development of universities in the 1960's and 1970's and that a return to the past in size and content of universities is unlikely. The decision-making processes of universities were easier when there were fewer than 100,000 students as compared with the 3/4 million of today. Not only has the university community become more complex due to the involvement of governments, their agencies and their requirement for greater accountability, the role and functions of the university have undergone dramatic changes. In Canada, as in most other industrial countries, changes in societal values, industrial structures and modern technology have had an impact on universities.

Although the universities are entering an era of uncertainty, and there is a need for reform and transformation, it is not necessarily in the direction the authors suggest. Over 80% of funding is derived from government public sources, and universities are increasingly pursuing economic and social objectives. Their simplistic solution of the past, if it was a "golden age", can be regarded as "reactionary" in an environment which now requires a balanced approach and a proper recognition of the achievement of this period.

The opinions and perceptions of the authors can be respected, but the lack of scholarly tools for documentation discredit the value of the book. The references on which the discussion is based are sparse and inadequate for the verification of many of the assertions made and no index is provided. For example, "Chapter IV Studying in the Supermarket" (pp. 57-84) has not one identifiable reference. The statistical data presented have no apparent origins and it requires detective skills to trace the data sources. In many instances, the quantitative information used is either wrong, inaccurate or misleading. Often, for no apparent reasons, the years selected are arbitrary such as 1948, 1951, 1961, and 1968: As illustrations, the authors argue that "The 1948-49 universities met 56 per cent of their costs either from fees or from endowment income" (p. 15), where the appropriate figure was in the neighborhood of 40 per cent; "Federal contributions to universities' finance started off at 12 per cent of operating revenues in 1951" (p. 16), where the actual figure was less than 6 per cent; "By 1961-62... grants from provincial governments had risen to 28 per cent" (p. 16) when the correct percentage was 37 per cent. Most serious is the assertion that "most Canadian universities now acquire as much as 90 per cent of their funding directly from provincial governments and students fees contribute as little as 8 per cent" (p. 15). Available information on university operating income shows that the provincial proportion is 70 per cent, including federal transfer of payments, and 15 per cent for students fees with some variations by province. The number of full-time postsecondary students was not 350,000 in 1983 as claimed (p. 20), but more than twice as high at 750,000. These examples seem to indicate superficial and eclectic treatment of readily available statistical information and the distorted use of these figures in presentation of one-sided arguments. It should have been the responsibility of the publisher and its editors to insist that the factual information has been checked and verified.

A number of other instances demonstrate the distortion of factual information such as the claim that faculty salaries grew exponentially (p. 36). Another misleading and inaccurate interpretation is that demography alone determined the growth in university enrolment. The dramatic increase was not only caused by the "baby boom" generation, but more importantly, by the increase in the participation rate of the 18-24 age group which grew from 7 per cent in 1960-61 to 12 per cent in 1971-72. Particularly significant was the growth in female participation rate which was 3.3 per cent in 1960-61 and almost tripled by the early 1970's. Do the authors suggest that the alleged decline in the quality of university education is due to the fact that female enrolment has increased so

spectacularly? Moreover, in most instances, the course selection is determined by the choices the undergraduate students are making themselves, based on their preception of the appropriate course mix depending on interest and employment opportunities.

According to the authors, the decline in the full-time university enrolment during the mid-1970's was due to the end of the 'Baby Boom.' As a result, "enrolments at most universities flattened out and even declined for several years" (p. 37). In actual fact, the decrease in enrolment was due to decline in the male participation rate. The source population of the 18 to 24 age group continued to expand dramatically until the early 80's from 2.7 million in 1971 to 3.3 million in 1983, a spectacular growth of 22 per cent.

Although the book deals exclusively with universities, the authors use data for community colleges and seem unable to differentiate between the two very distinct systems. In addition, the authors concentrate on the Social Sciences and Humanities and their granting council the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC). They do not mention that a major source for university research funding is provided by the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC) and the Medical Research Council (MRC). Compared to the 60 million dollar budget of the SSHRC, NSERC and the MRC have a combined budget of 450 million dollars for 1984-85. In addition, federal research funding is provided through a variety of other federal departments and agencies. The authors suggest that a high percentage of professors at Canadian business and law schools do virtually no research and publishing (p. 156) without providing evidence and recognition that research in professional disciplines is different and that the relevant teaching load is twice as high as for most other disciplines, as well as performing other roles for the university community.

Even more objectionable are the personalized attacks on individuals and the associated innuendo. One area which demands the authors' special attention is multidisciplinary programs such as Canadian, Women, Northern, and Urban Studies which are identified in Chapters VII as "Canadian and Other Useless Studies" (p. 130). The Secretary of State's Canadian Studies program received criticism which is clearly misplaced. Although no one disagrees that Canadian Studies are aligned to the traditional disciplines, but its very strength lies in its multidisciplinary nature and its focus on particular problems as a key "area" of study. The program of the Secretary of State has an annual budget of 3 to 4 millions and covers a variety of functions, in particular, the development of learning materials for all levels of education. The few hundred thousand dollars spent annually by External Affairs on Canadian Studies abroad is an excellent investment in promoting international relations on a modest scale and not as the sub-chapter heading indicates: "The Canadian Studies Empire". These programs sponsor Canadian faculty appointments in other countries, the visit of foreign scholars to Canada, and, in addition, the promotion of Canadian books. This chapter alone delineates the serious imbalances in the book; its failure to rely on rational arguments, and solid evidence, and its superficial use of information.

To look on events with hindsight is the professional role of historians, but this presupposes a certain amount of objectivity, detachment, substantiation and scholarly documentation which is frequently lacking in the book: The authors have identified a number of critical concerns in a bitter and aggressive manner, and there is some truth in their arguments which merit balanced presentation and fair discussion. In treating these issues in a provocative, distorted and sensational manner, they have performed a disservice to their community and to the Canadian public. Nevertheless, it might serve as an opportunity to initiate a lively debate on the role and functions of a modern university involving not only the academics, as perceived by the authors, but also the government and the private sectors as well as the students themselves who are as much a part of the university as professors of history. Such a dialogue should address not only the shortcomings of university education in the past two decades, but also its achievements and future direction.

Max von Zur-Muehlen

Note: Prepared by Dr. Max von Zur-Muehlen, President of the Canadian Society for the Higher Education. The review relies on Statistics Canada publications, particularly, *Education in Canada* (81-229, annual), *Historical Compendium of Education Statistics from Confederation to 1975* (81-568, May 1978), and *A Statistical Portrait of Canadian Higher Education from the 1960's to the 1980's*, May 1983. It will appear in the forthcoming issue of the Canadian Journal of Higher Education.