

Cameron, David M. *More Than an Academic Question: Universities, Government and Public Policy in Canada*. Halifax: The Institute for Research on Public Policy, 1991, 472 pages. Reviewed by Roseann Runte, Glendon College, York University.

Perceptive, intelligent and clear, this succinct contextualization of the current situation in Canadian university education portrays lucidly a crisis in the making since 1632, the year the Collège du Québec was founded. Placed in an historic framework of conflict between institutional autonomy and fiscal dependency on governments which saw the universities as instruments of public policy, of conflict between Church and State, and of conflict involving the eternal issues of rationalisation, accessibility, relevance, institutional democratisation and federal vs. provincial jurisdiction, this volume demonstrates how these issues are interrelated and how they have continually affected the development of Canadian universities in all ten provinces for over three hundred years.

Dr. Cameron focuses his study on the political, structural and administrative policy issues affecting Canadian universities in the period from the mid nineteen-fifties to the beginning of the nineties. He punctuates his coherent analysis of the current and past problems with excellent synopses of the various Commissions which have issued reports on higher education over the past forty years. He offers the reader a brief summary of the conclusions of each report, an indication of its immediate impact, and a longer-term view of the changes, if any, inspired by or caused by reaction to its recommendations.

The study includes a fairly large section devoted to the question of unionisation. Dr. Cameron identifies this movement as "problematic", in that he believes it rigidifies decision-making, increases bureaucracy, and reduces the capacity of the university to exercise its traditional autonomy while still paying attention to the exigencies of public policy (xvii-xviii, Foreword by Monique Jérôme-Forget). He points out the divergence in rulings in the U.S. and Canada following the Yeshiva decision in 1970, which brought "the unionisation movement in private universities to a complete stop" in the United States (379). There being no distinction between public and private universities in Canada, this had "little relevance" in this country (378). Dr. Cameron also calls into question the effectiveness of unions to increase salaries, citing reports by Marois, in Quebec and Skolnik and Woodford, in Ontario. He also provides a rapidly sketched historical setting for the beginnings of unionisation in Canada, the Crowe Affair, and

the evolution of the C.A.U.T. whose role and goals changed significantly over the years. This work also briefly touches on the questions of quality and the entry of the sciences and new disciplines, and of structures.

The university is often unable to increase tuition, while it is awarded annually less money in grants to operate. From 1976 to 1986, "apart from the anomalous situation of Prince Edward Island, all provinces reduced their real operating support per student" (393). At the same time, student numbers increased and universities were faced with an "age bulge" in the faculty. Rather than operate a smooth transition in which senior retirements were balanced by junior appointments, the universities are faced with a large number of faculty members at the upper end of the salary scale. While Dr. Cameron does not discuss the long term implications of this crisis, he does tie it to the different provincial decisions concerning retirement. As with the issue of equity, the universities are the underfunded instrument of public policy.

Dr. Cameron includes an interesting chapter on the question of unicameral or bicameral university governance and incisive résumés of the past and present issues, with particular reference to British Columbia, Ontario, Quebec and the Maritimes.

Dr. Cameron concludes with sanguine and not entirely optimistic views for universities in the future. He sees them involved in a process which has begun and from which they cannot escape or withdraw. He calls for universities to take their future in their own hands. Dr. Cameron provides us the benefit of his research and wisdom to give us a knowledge-base from which to do further research and on which to base our premises for action (rather than reaction). While he tantalises us by emphasising, for example, the importance of Boards of Governors and by indicating the large degree of inexperience of many of their members, he only makes one modest, but intriguing suggestion for reform: the nomination of outstanding faculty members from other institutions.

After reading this incisive work which will certainly clarify much Canadian University history by the sheer virtue of its breadth and depth of scope, and which will certainly spark debate because the author has not hesitated to touch on controversial issues, I would go much further than Monique Jérôme-Forget, who, in her Foreword recommends this work as indispensable reading for university administrators, board members and policy makers. I would suggest that it be also used as the basis for a future federal-provincial conference on higher education and as a springboard for serious discussion within the A.U.C.C., the C.A.U.T., and each university in the country.