The book finally considers reasons businesses occasionally do not succeed when strategic and organizational recipes for success are known and suggests their application to higher education which is "not a field of study with its own specific theories and paradigms, but an important social phenomenon that can be researched from a number of disciplinary perspectives" (p. 233).

I agreed with the idea of research in education emanating from a number of disciplinary perspectives. I disagree just as strongly with the application of the business model. I refuse to see students as products or consumers, but as learning partners, members of an academic community. And, I believe so unshakeably in the strength of knowledge and the nobility and necessity of the quest for it, that I would dare say that if higher education is a "social phenomenon," it is one of the most important, precious and central to humankind's history and future.

Randle W. Nelsen (Ed.). (1997). *Inside Canadian universities: Another day at the plant.* Kingston, ON: Cedarcreek Publications

Reviewed by James A. McAllister, Finance Council of Ontario Universities.

This is a gloomy, at times cranky, book which finds very little that is right and a great deal that is wrong with the modern Canadian university. The university's faults lie with the capitalist economy, the university administration, other faculty — especially white, middle-age, males — and some of the students (those white males again). These views reflect the attitudes of certain segments of the university faculty, views which I am sure have been shared with colleagues at the various faculty clubs around the country.

Inside Canadian Universities is actually a compilation of 11 articles plus an introduction written by 12 different academics. The editor, Randle W. Nelsen, adopted a story-telling emphasis and explains that he "encouraged all contributors to write in the first person — to tell the stories of their everyday lives as university employees." (p. 1). He is from Lakehead University and more than half of the contributors are from Ontario. While the rest of English Canada is reasonably well represented among the authors, Francophone universities are ignored. Almost half of the contributors are sociologists, with most of the rest coming from

fields such as social work, applied social science, women's studies and education. Only one is from a physical or biological science and none is from the humanities, commerce, or more traditional professions such as law or medicine. As such, they may be expected to reflect the priorities and biases of a rather narrow range of disciplines. Over half of the articles have been published elsewhere in journals such as *Society* and the *Canadian Journal of Education.*

The views of the contributors are many and often conflicting, particularly on the issue of gender politics. The female contributors all write about women's issues, while none of the men writes about gender issues. There appears to be little or no recognition of the great strides made by postsecondary education over the course of the last two or three decades on the gender issue. There is little recognition that for every four male students in our universities, there are five females; and that the enrolment growth over the past twenty or thirty years has consisted almost entirely of increased numbers of women. There is no recognition that female students receive a higher economic rate of return on their investment in higher education than do men, that more and more of those senior administrators that faculty love to criticize are women, that there are now more female university Presidents than ever before and that they head up some of the largest universities in the country.

In the first article, Michael Locke contributes a polemic against the rise of "edu-business," an approach which "assesses the value of a university to society in figures on its balance sheet with the short term objective of feeding its graduates into the job market" (p. 13). Specifically, he attacks the prominence of the university administration and its emulation of the private sector. To his credit, he is almost the only one to mention, as a major ill of contemporary universities, "the encouragement of multiple choice examinations to replace more educationally effective but time consuming formal examination papers" (p. 16) and, I would add, essays and research papers. The editor, Professor Nelsen, picks up on these same themes in an article of his own and identifies,

> . . . two critical messages . . . being imparted to students. Namely, there is a standardized objective body of information, a 'program' in the language of computopia, to be learned regardless of, in spite of, experience and style differences among potential instructors. . . (p. 29)

Bin-ky Tan argues that reflection in the modern university has been replaced by, to cite C. Wright Mills, "academic entrepreneurs" who "are inclined to assimilate the culture of the corporate world" (p. 39). David A. Nock makes use of "a hinterland-metropolis model to analyze differences between Lakehead and Western. He argues that elite university status is primarily dependent upon an institution's proximity to centres of capital like Toronto and Montreal" (p. 5). He notes "the truncated mandate of hinterland universities" (p. 59), but makes extensive use of data from a rather dubious source, Maclean's magazine, to prove his point. Edgar Z. Friedenberg identifies himself with many of the views on "political correctness" of Dinesh D'Souza, although not with D'Souza's right-wing politics. For Friedenberg, "the conviction that freedom of inquiry is indeed essential to the proper function of a university is central to the argument against the censorship of 'politically correct' expressions. . ." (p. 78).

Roxana Ng's article is a detailed recounting, from her point of view, of an incident which arose in a course which she taught on minority groups and race relations. During that course, "a male student brought a complaint against . . . (her) . . . charging that . . . (she) . . . used the class as a platform for feminism. He claimed that as a 'white male' he felt completely marginalized" (p. 84). The university administration's attempts to deal with the student's complaints were not appreciated by the author: "This pretence of fairness was immensely disempowering to me as a minority teacher. . . " (p. 96)

Susan Heald provides an article which is set within the context of the 1995 faculty strike at the University of Manitoba and the "collegial" model of university governance which the faculty were striking to preserve. She argues that the university's support of "merit," "academic freedom," and "university community" is used to maintain the status quo and, specifically, to prevent a more "inclusive" university. The strike "focussed more power in the hands of a few white faculty men who did not appear substantially different to me than the few white administration men whose power we were supposed to loathe." (p. 109)

In contrast to those who see the quality of education at our universities as declining, Professor Heald believes that:

> . . . the fact that students of colour, differently abled students, lesbian and gay students might come to class and be taught by professors who are like them, that issues of concern to them

> might be discussed in class, that they may not be as likely to be discouraged from attending graduate school or non-traditional programs, that they just might get through their degree without being harassed, sexually or otherwise — all of these, to me, substantially improve the quality of education for a large number of students. (p. 115)

What Professor Heald does for the University of Manitoba, Stephannie Roy does for the Political Science department at the University of British Columbia. She discusses the "chilly climate for students" which existed in that department during its crisis during 1995 and 1996. Bluma Litner, Amy Rossiter and Marilyn Taylor argue that the marginality of women in universities has a good deal to do with not being adequately represented in mainstream knowledge and women's different styles of learning. They "argue for the importance of narrative form as the starting point of an inductive process of sense-making in the classroom. . . By 'narrative' we mean story or story-telling; by 'inductive' we mean working from the particular to the general" (p. 147).

Gordon Bruyere provides a paper which "is a personal expression of how Anishnabe talking circles provide an alternative within social work education" (p. 172) and Professor Nelsen concludes the compilation of articles with an attack on "the headlong rush...into technologically-driven higher learning. . ." He questions whether we might be "moving too quickly in directions ultimately destructive of scholarship. . ." (p. 185) and is particularly critical of electronically-based distance education.

In sum, this book addresses many of the issues which concern the faculty of our universities, but it does so from a very narrow perspective and with and very little except the authors' personal opinions to back up their assertions. There is, for example, no discussion of why Canadian society has chosen to reduce its financial support for postsecondary education at a time when increased levels of education and training appear to be crucial to the success of most members of our labour force. Even the female academics fail to deal with the possibility that it is no coincidence that, as universities have become more feminized, their funding levels have been cut.

I cannot conclude this review without noting that, from a reading of this book, it would be difficult to recognize the elite status of full-time, tenured or tenure stream university faculty. Most members of the public would love their high salaries and generous benefits, job security, tenure,

sabbaticals, independence in what they choose to study, freedom in their daily work lives, and the time and opportunity they enjoy to engage in scholarly reflection. None of this appears to have been considered by the contributors to this volume, any more than any of them stop to ask why society plows billions of dollars into higher education each year. Neither do any of them ask questions about the employment prospects of their students or question whether the current approach to curriculum and course content is appropriate in an age of mass higher education, high unemployment and global economic pressures.