

The following article appeared in today's edition of the GLOBE and MAIL:

ONUS ON UNIVERSITIES TO BALANCE BUDGETS

"It is not my job to run the universities."

With that disclaimer out of the way John White, Ontario's Minister of Colleges and Universities, began to list some of the things he feels are wrong with higher education in the province and how he would like them changed.

He wants to see them more efficient... "more scholar for the dollar" is the way he once put it, more teaching and less research-oriented, more egalitarian and less "aristocratic" and more willing to change.

Though he doesn't issue direct orders to presidents at least one university administrator has summed up Mr. White's position as "he who pays the piper... and calls the tune."

He will pay - about \$750-million for post-secondary education this year on behalf of Ontario taxpayers. And he calls the tune indirectly but strongly through such methods as interviews, public speeches and special reports.

Last December the Lapp Report on engineering education in Ontario recommended wide changes, including the phasing out of some existing programs. In the latter half of next month the Commission on Post-Secondary Education in Ontario is expected to present a major report calling for wide changes in the university and college system.

While these are not direct orders to the universities "there's certainly a lot of moral suasion" Mr. White noted.

In an interview this week Mr. White, 40, who was revenue minister from 1968 until this spring's Cabinet shuffle, maintained a hard line on university spending.

Shortly after taking over the education post, he announced cuts in building and graduate studies budgets.

This fall most of the province's universities and colleges got fewer students than expected and the universities alone stand to lose about \$14 million in revenue expected from last spring's forecasts.

At least three of the newer and smaller universities have approached the Government asking for changes in grant structure, which is tied to actual enrolment this December 1, because they hired staff based on the inaccurate projections.

"I'm not prepared to accept responsibility for those miscalculations," he stated.

The Minister said the Council of Ontario Universities which represents presidents and administrators, last spring forecast a shortage of 3,500 places for freshmen this fall. "We asked them to re-evaluate the first year capacity which they had available for students in this province," he said.

? who was responsible?

(Recently Davidson Dunton, who was president of the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada until last week and is president of Carleton University in Ottawa until he resigns next June, claimed the Government pressured Ontario universities to increase their forecasts and prepare for 3,500 more students than originally planned.)

However 5,000 fewer students than planned actually did show up and universities are left with too many staff members for the grants they will get this year.

"The first thing they have to do is cut their costs," Mr. White continued. "They have to attract more students to their institutions to get them up to a scale which is economical.

"This cannot be done by people sitting around the boardroom wringing their hands."

Two of the small, new universities facing financial problems are Laurentian in Sudbury and Lakehead in Thunder Bay.

Mr. White said there has been too great a flow of students from the north to Southern Ontario universities and too little reverse flow.

He said it was up to the new institution to use some "pioneering talents" and bring in new courses to fulfil society's needs rather than trying to copy big, old universities.

"I will offend a lot of people if I use the word promotion but... I think these emerging universities have to promote their wares to a much greater extent than they have."

Asked what will happen to the small universities such as Laurentian, which is expecting a deficit of more than \$1-million, Mr. White said "it is their problem at the present time... I suppose they do what any other organization does if income falls short of expenses... they attempt to increase income and they attempt to decrease their expenses."

"We think the onus is on them to balance."

Mr. White has no criticisms of the building boom era of the 1960s, but said that it is over and university leaders should turn their thoughts to the product rather than its housing.

From his own experience in the University of Western Ontario, where he got a business diploma in 1947 and an Economics MA in 1966, he had criticisms of the lack of change in 20 years. He said the teaching was the only thing that had not changed in London in that period.

To get new thinking in universities he wants changes like the one at the University of Toronto, where next July 1 the old senate and board of governors will be scrapped for a 42-member governing council. The council will include eight students, 12 faculty members, women and "outsiders" who are supposed to breathe new ideas into the old institution.

Mr. White, responsible for 14 provincially supported universities, Ryerson Polytechnical Institute, the Ontario College of Art and the 20 community colleges said his job is to "interpret society's wishes to... administrators".

"There is a deep-seated feeling that a number of changes are needed at this juncture... I think the criticism springs not so much from any failures of the universities in the 1960s so much as the puzzlement which most of us have about the role of universities in the 1970s."

"I don't see it as my function to say to the University of Toronto you must do thus and so... I'm simply asking a number of questions in the hope of motivating the decision makers at that level to look at things afresh because the way we did it before isn't good enough now and the way somebody else is doing it isn't good enough for us."

Aside from calling for more efficiency he expressed these views:

"I would like to see the universities somewhat more open... I would like to see them very deliberately rid themselves of the correlation which is observable between the income and wealth holdings of parents and the probability of a student going to university.

"The university cannot stand aloof from the community in a way that sometimes is observed at the present... I don't want them to become quasi-city halls.

"There should be a definite effort made to make the universities more egalitarian. I am thinking of the elitism which I seem to sense by which a person having a particular title inherits a particular status... and I think universities are one of the very few remaining sectors of the society where this old-fashioned elitism is to be found."

He praised moves by Waterloo University to open some of its buildings to the community and Western to establish a joint art museum with the city.

On the rapidly expanding community college system, which was established six years ago from the old technical institutes, Mr. White said he would resist any effort to have them offer arts courses which would lead to university studies.

He said experience in the United States showed in such cases "the colleges themselves just become very pale carbon copies of the universities."

He also predicted more emphasis would be put on part-time and continuing education and indicated the post-secondary education commission report would probably have more to say on that subject.

Asked about this fall's enrolment, which brought 6,000 fewer college and university students than expected, he had some theories.

He said jobs are less related to degrees now and "it's becoming obvious having a piece of paper called a BA is no longer a means by which a person in the work force can automatically acquire a significant income differential ... and I think that lesson is being learned and I'm very glad it is being learned."

More people are also taking time off from studies to work and will study later. Others are just taking off for holidays in Europe.

He said it might even be proof of the theory advanced a year ago by educator Ivan Illich that North American society would "de-school" itself radically in 18 months.

Mr. White said one obvious need pointed out by recent trends and problems related to graduates getting work is the need for job forecasting.

He has asked the government's Committee on University Affairs to look into the feasibility of job forecasting for the first time.

Mr. White said it is a new field and fraught with peril but "the present system is the worst of all... namely letting students find through casual, uninformed gossip in the corridors whether chemistry graduates are more in demand than biology graduates."