RALPH M. MILLER

Wishful Thinking is no Guide to Education

In labelling his massive report, *A Choice of Futures,* Dr. Worth expresses his faith that education can be the decisive instrument of social policy. He believes that by instituting the appropriate educational programs Alberta can move towards one kind of future rather than another. This faith in education leads Dr. Worth to attempt to establish the right basis for educational planning, and the first portion of his report is an exercise in social analysis and moral philosophy in which he sets out the goals to be achieved through appropriate education. He then undertakes to explain the educational provisions necessary to achieve the goals.

In spite of the general soundness of this approach, the Worth Report fails in three critical respects (1) the analysis and social philosophy are weak, amounting in instances to little more than wishful thinking, (2) Dr. Worth overestimates the impact of education as a social change agent, (3) in many parts of his report which could be buttressed by careful description and accurate data Dr. Worth sees no need for "scholarly respectability" and seeks to get by with unsubstantiated assertions. I sincerely wish Dr. Worth had developed an argument equal to his aims for there is a revolutionary potential in his report which I heartily endorse. When he suggests that "the realization of a second-phase industrial society is undesirable, if not self destructive, since it is guided by values that do not appear workable," (p. 33) he is urging a sweeping social reform. Taken at his word, such a rejection of prevailing concern with competitive economic growth, combined with the choice of a Person-Centred Society, is a declaration against a society which makes its decisions in the market place and worships the ideals of exploitive capitalism.

Unfortunately, the explanation of the choice between the Person-Centred Society and the Second-Phase Industrial Society is one of the least cogent parts of the report and Albertans may sleep safely in their beds never suspecting that a tiny call for drastic social reform was ever uttered. Dr. Worth may himself have sensed the futility of seriously urging such a program for Alberta for he couches this part of his argument in grand generalizations designed to satisfy all tastes. Needless to say, his oversimplified generalizations are also uninformative. Altogether then, the

report fails to offer a convincing social analysis and sets out flabby slogans as social objectives.

We must recognize at the outset that having made *his choice of futures,* Dr. Worth then does not set out a series of alternatives with a range of information sufficient to enable readers to make their own choices. Instead, he sets out some information and many more unsupported assertions and biased comparisons intended to persuade readers to his choice.

The contrast between the Second-Phase Industrial Society and the Person-Centred Society in the table presented on page 32 is both drastically simple and drastically unfair. Yet it was surely incumbent upon Commissioner Worth to examine these positions carefully after he had declared

> The central question involved in a choice between our alternative futures is this: will the traditional values and beliefs that have brought us to the present point of technological and economic development continue to work in the decades ahead? (p. 33)

Dr. Worth devotes less than three hundred words to setting forth the value systems between which he would have us choose, and it seems his table of contrasts is intended to be persuasive rather than informative.

Consider, for example, that in the list of traditional values there is only one reference to a religious value when, in fact, a variety of religious traditions have significantly affected the development of values in Western society. Presumably "puritanism" may be accepted as a value derived from a religious tradition, and I must immediately object that in focussing upon this aspect of the Protestant tradition Dr. Worth overlooks a host of religious values which are emphatically traditional and which also emphasize the importance of the person. To illustrate, the concept of the sanctity of the person enters the Western tradition from Jewish theology in the idea of all men as the children of God; subsequent Christian teaching concurs and in the specific teachings of the Roman and Mormon churches the perfectability of man is declared.

As well as providing only a sketchy and biased survey of the traditional position, Dr. Worth takes a great deal for granted when he uses terminology such as "acquirement", "tradition-oriented" and "self-control and discipline" to explain major implications of the traditional position. I doubt that we all understand these terms in the same way without any further explanation. More important, when they are contrasted to alternative implications of the Person-Centred Society these terms become less clear than at first sight. Thus, "acquirement" as a governing value of the individual in the Second-Phase Industrial Society is contrasted to "self-fulfillment" in the Person-Centred Society. What is the difference between these terms? Assuredly there is some difference, but also they have much in common. Does not a person *fulfill* himself by acquiring an education? Eminent defenders of tradition — Arnold, Newman, Hutchins to name a few — have defended education as essentially a means to the fuller development of individuals rather than as a means to acquisition of

wealth or power. The terms are not necessarily in sharp contrast, but the manner in which Dr. Worth has set them out suggests he associates a selfish and material view with "acquirement" and a generous and humane view with "self-fulfillment." I am groping for words here because Dr. Worth offers no clues to assist in interpretation other than his general view that the Second-Phase Industrial Society is limited and self-destructive whereas the Person-Centred Society is more humane.

In sum, Dr. Worth's choice of futures is open to serious question. He has not represented the alternatives accurately and has outlined them very briefly and superficially. His "argument" amounts to little more than rationalization.

The accuracy of his future forecasts requires only brief comment as he himself admits they are only probable and warns readers that in each forecast "the word *will* should be read as though it were preceded by *probably* or *likely*." (p. 1) Having uttered this disclaimer he is then free to offer the whole raft of forecasts with an air of confident certainty. At the very least, one would have hoped for an occasional indication of the range of probability for particular forecasts. To note one example, the claim that "The quality of interpersonal relationships will improve as altruism becomes stressed," (p. 2) can have no more probability than any other pious hope. What evidence is there that altruism is becoming more stressed? Perhaps even more notably, he suggests "Companionship and economic cooperation will highlight husband-wife relations." (p. 3) In what way will this mark a change from the marriage relationship as it has long been known on Alberta farms? To what extent do the forecasts pick out significant changes at all?

Some of the broadest of the forecasts, centring on the march of technology, have greater probability and are, indeed, already upon us. In the main, however, the futures forecasts are so dubious as to be of little value in the determination of policy.

The "futures forecast" with respect to value systems leads into the critical problem of Dr. Worth's chosen social policy. He predicts:

> A twofold and seemingly contradictory change in the current value system toward an emphasis on values referring to the worth and well-being of each person; and toward an emphasis on values referring to the social good or the welfare of mankind. (p. 6)

I hope the prediction is correct, for such a trend would surely solve many of our problems. The Worth Report offers no evidence in support of this hopeful assertion, and perhaps the greatest weakness of the social theory underlying Worth's argument and educational policy recommendations is that he repeatedly assumes an increasing tendency towards altruism in our society. His hopes for such a value shift are placed mainly on the young, that is, he sees them as being more idealistic, humane, and generous than their elders. Contrary to Dr. Worth's unsubstantiated hope it might be mentioned that the young have played a large part in

the politics of confrontation. The most striking Canadian instance of confrontation may have been the demonstrations at Sir George Williams University and at Simon Fraser. Did those demonstrators show any marked generosity or concern for the views and rights of others? Nor should we congratulate ourselves for the progress that minority groups seem recently to have been making in our society. If Indians, for example, have recently obtained redress for some social and economic wrongs these gains have not been the simple result of increased altruism on the part of the majority in Canadian society. Indians have made headway because they have organized themselves so as to achieve some political power, and Indian leaders are rightly skeptical of depending upon the unsolicited help of well-meaning whites.

In saying that the futures forecast respecting value systems leads into the critical problem of the Worth Report, I refer to the fact that *A Choice of Futures* purports to offer directions for education which will produce a Person-Centred Society intended to achieve "socially responsible individualization that helps to set loose the creativity, inventiveness and uniqueness of all individuals throughout their lives." (pp. 28, 45) Given such an intention to support individualization within a particular social context, Dr. Worth is required to explain how individuals adjust their differences so as to maintain a society. How to reconcile individual freedom and initiative with social order and common restraints is a long-standing problem in political theory as well as in moral philosophy. The problem is more conspicuous in this age of Aquarius when many groups are challenging established practices and earlier compromises and adjustments are proving inadequate.

Dr. Worth recognizes the problem, but I do not think his proposed solution will stand up to examination. The nature of his solution has already been suggested: because he assumes altruism to be increasing he assumes that in doing their own thing individuals will be considerate of others and social order will be the result of individualism.

> Nurturing of autonomous individuals does not imply the selfish gratification of one's own desires at the expense of others. The sum of such individual interests simply adds up to the disadvantage of all. It does imply that the needs of society and its individual members must be reconciled so that both may flourish. This means that through open inquiry into life itself, each of us must learn to assess and apply those conditions of human association necessary to ensure human survival and community benefit. Autonomy of the individual is more than responsibility to oneself: it is responsibility to all. (p. 40)

Again, I admire the sentiment of this generous ideal but find that Dr. Worth has utterly failed to explain why or how such individual-social agreement will be achieved. The last sentence of the preceding quotation, for example, is only Dr. Worth's definition of "autonomy of the individual" and what he *chooses* the expression to mean is no argument or evidence for the possibility of individuals actually so behaving. Note also that he falls back upon the notion of "open inquiry which sounds much like a slogan from the contemporary social studies curriculum. Pre-

sumably, "open inquiry" has something to do with widespread public participation and with free access to information. Can Dr. Worth explain "open inquiry" in such a way as to show why it must lead to value agreement among individuals? It would seem that the value theory of the utilitarians and, more recently, the pragmatists, has foundered on precisely this point as they have not been able to show why or how men will finally agree on a set of values which all understand as being for the common good.

If Dr. Worth fails to clarify the individual-social relationship because he only assumes what requires to be proved, his argument becomes even more obscure when he considers individualization in the context of education. If there is a theme running through the report it is that individualization should be our great goal and that in striving towards this goal we will automatically achieve social unity. As applied to education this theme suggests greater responsibility and freedom for the student and it again requires the assumption that individualization of studies will be compatible with province-wide coordination of programs and with the institution of new interlocking administrative structures aimed to increase efficiency of operation.

In his first attempt to specify individualization in the context of basic education, he explains

> Individualization is concerned with the full flowering of each person. In Maslow's terminology, it is self-actualization; in Biblical terminology, it is developing one's talents; in the contemporary idiom, it is being your own man. (p. 52)

It may be important to note that Dr. Worth's notion of "contemporary idiom" is about a generation out of date. If we read "doing your own thing" for "being your own man" it would be more apparent that these statements are *not* equivalent. The *obligation* to develop one's talents as argued in the Bible does not accord with doing your own thing, for the latter choice often involves denial of obligation. Having begun with such comfortably vague generalities, Dr. Worth then offers an "explanation" which fails to communicate any clear meaning.

> Knowledge of alternatives and criteria for choice, combined with wise and judicious counsel, should in most instances ensure that essentials will not be ignored. Such knowledge and counsel should also constitute a safeguard against the danger that the student will have so much apparent freedom that he ends up actually having none. (p. 52)

It sounds as though Alberta education will be splendid if essentials are not ignored, if wise and judicious counsel prevails, and if excessive freedom is safeguarded against, but what does it all mean? I challenge other readers to find a definition of essentials in the report, to discover the source of wise and judicious counsel, or to locate the criteria which indicate excess of freedom.

This failure to explain stems in no small part from Dr. Worth's quaint notion that scholarly respectability is inimical to communication. In

choosing not to concern himself with documenting some very sweeping claims the Commissioner then goes on to offer emotive contrasts (as in the table contrasting value systems, see above pp. 2 - 4) and fine-sounding generalities in lieu of serious argument.

Deficiencies of argument are more apparent when the Report goes on to defend the proposition that, in some special sense, students know what is best and will shape institutions and programs to suit their knowledge of what is best. The first clue to this remarkable claim on behalf of students is a reference to the child's "pristine valuing competence." (p 51) In light of subsequent comments I believe Dr. Worth is really claiming that children have an innate capacity to make good value judgments. He goes on to suggest that this competence may be "inhibited and constrained by the often selfish and rigid intervention of adults." If Dr. Worth really means the children, without having been acculturated or trained up by their elders, can make sound value judgments, why does he hide behind such a contrived phrase? Why does he not admit to holding an intuitionist theory of value or to believing in the existence of specific innate capacities?

In any event, if such unsupported claims for the innate goodness of the child are to be the basis of the educational theory in the Report, I should want to challenge that theory at every point.

Two longer statements carry the idea about the innate ability of students much further as Dr. Worth's comments on the characteristics of learners imply that their judgment is to be preferred to that of their teachers.

> It follows that the mature students of tomorrow will not be willing to accept without serious questioning prevailing attitudes towards scholarly respectability, which they will see as academic insolence. While not repudiating rationality, reverence for intellectual power alone will be scorned as perversion of their broader approach to learning and life. (p. 158) . . . the dominant thrust of youth is toward sanity and integrity in human affairs reflecting their profound belief in man. (p. 159)

There is now considerable agreement that education should be a genuine interplay in which teachers and students respect each other and in which students can contribute ideas and criticisms fully as worthy as those supplied by teachers. Dr. Worth goes beyond this position and asserts that learners have a "broader approach to learning and life," than is reflected in the ideals of scholarship and that, presumably, the work of schools and teachers *must* accommodate to this broader approach. Furthermore, when he credits youth with a thrust towards "sanity and integrity in human affairs" he concludes that they will *demand* (again, presumably successfully) "that our institutions for schooling champion this belief."

These claims amount to saying that the students have the right approach and schools must conform to it, and such a position is far more, and far

different, than saying that learners must be respected as individuals and that education should be a mutual activity involving students and teachers. It seems that Dr. Worth is really saying learners, in general, know what is needed and that the school need only meet their demands. If he is not saying something like this, then what is the point of his emphasis upon the good judgment of learners?

Two more points should be brought out. First it is notable that Dr. Worth is again deriding scholarly respectability. Whatever he has against the prevailing standards of scholarship, it would be helpful if he would tell us in what particular ways scholars fall into the sin of "academic insolence." His vague references to scholarly respectability and his repeated inferences that it is a bad thing amount to no more than name calling. Some of us might admit to weaknesses in current academic practice, but surely if they are to be points at issue in a major report they should be specified. It is shallow and shabby for Dr. Worth to repeat insinuations and commit himself to no specific charge.

Second, the same vagueness is apparent in Dr. Worth's appeal to some thrust toward sanity and integrity in human affairs on the part of youth. Does he believe that there is an homogeneous youth culture with a coherent set of values? Is the drug culture not a part of youth culture, and are not drop-outs, motorcycle gangs, CUSO volunteers, high school honour students and hippies equally parts of youth culture? Which of these groups manifest the sanity and integrity in question? If Dr. Worth believes they all do, or that they all agree on what it means to be your own man, his claims to draw values from the experience of youth must be rejected as nonsense. On the other hand, as soon as he identifies certain groups or certain values as the ones reflecting sanity and integrity then he must explain how he selected those groups or values.

Dr. Worth is offering very broad generalizations couched in emotive language and hoping the mixture will pass for serious social comment and educational theory.

So to reject Dr. Worth's argument that youth can be our guide to values is not to deny the importance of these young human beings or their many good qualities. I am only challenging the idea that they have a uniquely right view of the world, and I submit that insofar as Dr. Worth only describes that view in general terms of "sanity" and "integrity," and never undertakes to explain what is meant with respect to any particular value question, he deludes himself.

The argument to this point is that the Worth Report fails to provide an adequate social analysis and, similarly, fails to develop a basis in educational theory that can afford grounds for specific educational policy recommendations. I have also tried to show that a main reason for the failure of the argument is that in striving *merely* to communicate the

Commissioner grants himself license to generalize freely while offering no substantial evidence or detailed argument.

Before taking up the third respect in which I believe the Report fails, I should like to raise further questions about the soundness of Dr. Worth's educational theory. How closely has Dr. Worth read the relevant educational literature? The question is important because he makes some statements which are either flatly wrong or open to serious question. To begin with a short example, consider his statement

> There is no adequate evidence that typically required basic education courses and standings in them constitute a reliable basis for predictions of success or failure in higher education. (p. 139)

Apparently, he is referring to required courses in the public schools and, if so, he has a strange concept of reliability. It is generally accepted that even if performance in school subjects is not a perfect indicator of later performance in university it is still the best we have. Grades obtained in school, for example, correlate more highly with university performance than do intelligence test scores.[1]

Perhaps we can discern the motive for such denigration of the value of school grades, for Dr. Worth continues in the next paragraph

> Obviously a person's failure to meet admission requirements does not offset his or her need for higher education.

Obvious questions come to mind. What is a *need* for higher education? Do people need higher education to get jobs? Do they need it to maintain their social status? Do they need it to satisfy their intellectual hunger? Most important, does everybody need higher education? To speak in such a way only threatens to confuse an issue which is already sufficiently complicated. There is, I submit, no point in having *various* post-secondary institutions unless there are differential admission standards so that students are recruited for the different institutions on the basis of their ability to do the kind of work required.

As it turns out, Dr. Worth is really concerned about university admission for persons from lower socio-economic groups. Here he has a genuine and well recognized problem, but he missed the point in coming at the problem by means of a general question about admission standards. Whatever admission standards are used, concessions must be made if members

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[1]It is interesting that Dr. Worth's one reference to a study of university admissions procedures is offered in connection with section iv, "process." He offers no such reference in the context of section iii, "structure," wherein the quoted statement appears. His reference is to D. B. Black, "Application of Alberta Admissions Research Findings in a Quasi-Operational Setting," *Alberta Journal of Educational Research,* Vol. XV, No. 3, September, 1969, pp. 131-150. Moreover, in the study cited, Dr. Black is concerned only with the efficiency of various school ratings as determined by the percentage of the test group gaining admission to, and continuing in, university. Dr. Worth cites no studies which examine performance in school subjects as predictors of performance at university. He does not, for example, refer to Black's earlier study, "Methods of Predicting Freshman Success: Summary and Evaluation," *Alberta Journal of Educational Research,* Vol. XII, No. 2, June 1966, pp. 111-126.

of disadvantaged groups are to have any chance of showing what they can do when put into a richer learning environment such as the university. Let us then talk about the provisions which may be necessary, including special orientation and extra tutorial assistance, so that disadvantaged students may have a chance in university programs.

Such a proper concern to redress socio-economic disparities should not become the occasion for vague generalizations *against* the whole concept of admission requirements. Dr. Worth's remark about the "need for higher education" seems to lead to the position that if a student arrives at university and says he needs higher education he should be admitted. Since some of the better portions of the Report are concerned with costs and the efficient use of educational resources, it can fairly be retorted against Dr. Worth that it is very expensive and very wasteful to use the first year of university as a screening device, by admitting all who come and failing those who cannot do the work. Or would the argument be carried further so that the "need for higher education" must be satisfied by retaining students in university whether they succeed in their work or not?

I have pressed Dr. Worth's example to some length because admission to all post-secondary institutions is a difficult question and it is important to realize that Dr. Worth has only trifled with it. I find it difficult to give credence to the educational thinking of a man who can declare that a person's failure to meet university admission requirements does not offset his need for higher education as if such a declaration gave guidance for the revision of admission standards.

Dr. Worth plunges more deeply into educational theory when he discusses "Methods". He says

> What might be called the natural way to learn is from direct experience and action. If the learner wants to understand an engine he may take one apart and put it back together again. Since the engine is an orderly learning environment, he will learn from experience. (p. 198)

Superficially, this sounds good, but it will not wash. It is clearly possible to spend much time disassembling and assembling elaborate machinery and gain little understanding of the principles of operation. Any person who can read and has a modicum of manual dexterity, for example, can assemble very elaborate high fidelity equipment, but in the process he rarely comes to any understanding of the functioning of electronic circuits.

Having begun with an appeal to direct experience and action as the best means to understanding, Dr. Worth proceeds to argue, among other things, for more attention to problem solving and inquiry. He complains

> What is now going on in the province's classrooms is massive testimony to the utter neglect of the learner's innate ability to solve problems. (p. 198)

Again we are confronted with the *innate* powers of the learner! In this case if Dr. Worth means anything else than that, being human, children can learn to solve problems, what can he mean?

Once more he deals with a complex question very superficially and offers up some of the current catch-words in lieu of serious discussion. As a specific objection I might point out that the greatest advantage of being human and having the capacity to learn languages and other symbol systems is that we do not have to discover everything for ourselves. We can learn from the discoveries of other men and profit from a long inheritance of human experience. Discovering and working with materials other than books and pens are certainly important in education but they are not panaceas. Dr. Worth's superficial excursion into method adds little to the substance of his Report, and it has no bearing on the recommendations he makes.

If the social analysis and philosophy of the Worth Report were shown to be inadequate to support his choice of futures, it is also apparent that the educational theory is equally inadequate as a basis for educational recommendations. It is not surprising, therefore, to find Dr. Worth offering old bromides as cures for our educational ills. Thus, he says

> . . . it is difficult for each student to enroll in history, biology, geography, literature, sociology, political science and anthropology. A single course which thematically treats all of these viewpoints would be very valuable to the average student. (p. 191)

"Integration" and "inter-disciplinary" are now words to conjure with in education, but the mind boggles at the idea of wrapping up in a single package the gist of seven courses which students do not have time to study separately. Are students to have "direct experience" in all seven areas and are they to "discover" important concepts of each discipline?

Should anyone think the above recommendation is a clear and useful direction to educators, let them bear in mind Dr. Worth's fondness for tossing off meaningless slogans, often as the climax to alleged arguments or expositions. Consider how he concludes the introduction to his chapter, "Process".

> The processes of schooling cannot be divorced from the process of living. This report makes that point through its principles of context and personalization; others less polite make the same point by saying that the schools are teaching too much rubbish and too little love. (p. 153)

If I have raised substantial questions about the adequacy of the social analysis and the educational theory of the Worth Report, it is still worthwhile to return to my second major objection. Dr. Worth assumes that education can be a decisive force for social change as evidenced in the opening sentence of his chapter, "A Sense of Direction." "Most of us share the belief that a better life results from better education." (p. 36) It is a moot point whether provinces which have the highest rates of participation in education, such as British Columbia, Alberta, and Ontario, enjoy their high standards of living because of their high levels of education or whether they are able to afford high levels of education because they have high levels of economic activity. We are not sure whether

education is predominantly a cause or an effect. More critical, in view of Dr. Worth's hopes, is the failure of the most indefatigable educational reformers, including John Dewey, to demonstrate that a radically altered educational system could be the spur to significant social change.[2]

In contrast to Dr. Worth's hopes for education as the key to social change is that part of the Marxian analysis of social change which has best stood the test of time. This analysis holds that the economic and productive activities of a society are the major determinants of values, and this view is particularly pertinent to Dr. Worth's intention of choosing the Person-Centred Society over the Second-Phase Industrial Society. Assuredly, the values of the Second-Phase Industrial Society do arise from the concern with production, with efficiency, with competition for markets, etc. As long as the Alberta government is sending massive missions to Japan and other parts of the world in an expanding drive for markets and must rely on ever more intensive exploitation of fossil fuels as the key to the good life, Dr. Worth is whistling down the wind in his hopes of shifting to a Person-Centred Society through the agency of education. Again, I sincerely hope that the radical political intention of Dr. Worth's program is recognized, for it is a noble intention and I regret that he has so clearly failed to articulate a program with any chance of accomplishing it.

Practical Recommendations of the Report

In the wake of rejection of Dr. Worth's social analysis and educational theory it would be reasonable to expect a similar rejection of his educational recommendations. However, rejection of the recommendations does not clearly follow from rejection of the social theory, as the theory is, in fact, irrelevant to the recommendations. Insofar as there is any basis for the recommendations it comes from widespread public demand (as reported by Dr. Worth in support of some proposals), from an intention to initiate programs which may reduce educational costs, and from recognition of some changes already underway in Alberta education. All these

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[2]Rush Welter, *Popular Education and Democratic Thought in America,* Columbia University Press, New York, 1962. In a volume which he says "focusses on the political aspects of the American belief in education" (p. 1), Welter finds that education has not fulfilled the hopes of reformers who intended that a revised education should stimulate political and social change. His conclusion, in part, is

> This volume has been a history of educational innovations that have not worked for the purposes and in the ways in which they were intended to, and it should caution us against most of the educational ideas that are current in American thought. (p. 334)

Philip Foster, *Education and Social Change in Ghana,* Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1964, makes a more specific point which bears directly against Worth's thesis. Foster argues that changes in education have no effect on vocational aspirations, and his study suggests that economic incentives exert a more powerful influence than anything which occurs in school. Since Worth is arguing for a shift away from the economic values which dominate the second-phase industrial society, his hopes run directly counter to Foster's findings.

bases may be challenged, but they have little or no connection with the earlier excursions into social theory.

As an example, consider the recommendation that grade twelve final examinations be abolished, that every public and separate school in Alberta should be accredited, and that a set of power tests prepared by the Department of Education be available as an appeal procedure for students. This set of proposals is sensible, but it does little more than confirm the move away from Departmental Examinations *which has already begun* and which came about partly as a result of heavy cost increases for setting and marking the examinations. Whether or not Alberta accepts Dr. Worth's choice of futures has no bearing on the usefulness of these recommendations.

The major proposals of the report, for the institution of the Alberta Academy and ACCESS (Alberta Communications Centre for Educational System and Services), amount to no more than following the lead given by such undertakings as Britain's Open University and recognition of the communications technology which already exists in Alberta. Indeed, given the proliferation of television production facilities in CARET, MEETA, the universities and the technical institutes, it is high time for coordination. It is also time to ask how many such production facilities Alberta taxpayers should be expected to support. However, while asking what range and quality of facilities Alberta taxpayers should be asked to support, the grounds of economy on which the Academy and ACCESS proposals are based may also be questioned. In order to achieve per student costs averaging $1,760 per year (taken as the cost of five courses) the Academy must have 10,000 active course registrations per year or approximately 5,000 students largely on a part-time basis. (see pp. 106-107) At present, we can only guess what demand for the Academy programs will be. However, it seems unlikely that participation rates in Alberta would be higher than in the Open University in Britain, because the less stringent admission requirements of Alberta universities (as compared to British universities) and the better economic conditions in Alberta suggest there is a smaller backlog of people in Alberta who were unable to pursue higher education in regular institutions. Allowing for the difference in population between Alberta and Britain, the ratio being roughly 1 : 30, if participation rates in the Academy are no higher than in the Open University, it is unlikely that there will be more than 1,400 students in the Academy. What is the likelihood that Academy enrollment can reach levels which would make it a cheaper alternative to conventional university education? Even on the basis of Dr. Worth's seemingly optimistic assumptions, Academy costs are about the same as costs in the first years of undergraduate programs in the University of Alberta. Nor does there seem to be any allowance for library costs in the Alberta Academy, yet it will surely be important to make new supplies of books and other learning

materials available in many areas of Alberta if Academy courses are to be more than humdrum, text-bound, makeshifts.

In contrast to the doubts which may be raised about the economy of operation of the Academy is the confident assertion offered in the "Readers' Companion to the *Worth Report*:"

> A successful Academy would cut back the costs of traditional higher education very significantly since it has no building costs and its course costs do not change all that much whether it has 3,000 students or 30,000. P. 12.

In point of fact, the Academy has little hope of having an enrollment of 3,000 unless it takes over some of the work of existing institutions. Such a take-over is, again, explicitly suggested in "A Reader's Companion." "It is because of the Academy that Dr. Worth can recommend no new colleges, universities or institutes for 15 years, if ever." (p. 12) Given that the Academy will spend $400,000 to develop each of its first five courses, it is fair to ask how much instruction such amounts of money could purchase if applied to existing programs of continuing education. Are a new institutional structure and a $31,000,000 communications network required to service a few thousand students? What is the point of setting up a system which will have to lure students away from institutions already built and paid for?

Finally, we may note a striking inconsistency in the Academy proposals. In arguing for changes in Alberta education, Dr. Worth offers such opinions as the following:

> The lecture presently has a very limited value in schooling, and that value is likely to be lessened in the future. p. 198

> Generally we know that small group work, individual work, discussion, tutorials, laboratory work, learning games, demonstrations and multi-sensory experience yield better results than do the lecture, question-answer, seat-work recitation, note-taking and non-integrated audio-visual materials. p. 199

> The increase of staff-student interaction at the beginning of higher education should be a priority undertaking for all institutions. p. 203

Having made such a plea for more student-teacher contact, for smaller classes, for more student participation, and for a greater variety of learning situations, how can Dr. Worth then propose the Alberta Academy as a replacement for much of the undergraduate work now done in universities? The Academy is much more massive, much more impersonal, and has much less capacity for student feed-back than typical university classes. The Academy, remember, is not just an alternative to existing universities and not just a service to students in outlying areas, for it cannot achieve lower unit costs unless it draws students away from existing institutions (even then it does not seem likely to recruit the necessary numbers of students).

Altogether, the proposals for the Alberta Academy are unconvincing, and before millions of dollars are spent in developing another system at the expense of the taxpayers better information than the Worth Report

has to offer must be put forward. It seems doubtful that the Academy will effect any reduction of costs in higher education and, most certainly, its programs will not correct the pedagogic faults Dr. Worth claims to find in existing universities.

If the Academy and ACCESS proposals are dubious, Dr. Worth seems flatly to ignore the experience and research in established compensatory education programs which suggest that increased and enriched educational opportunities do not compensate for socio-economic disadvantages. When he states "children of the poor must begin earlier and receive concerted instruction if they are to catch up," (p. 162) he is flying in the face of recent experience in American programs in large cities, and, as usual, he cites no evidence to support his hopeful claim.[3]

The very general proposals for better coordination of educational activities in various institutions, for the creation of two branches within the department of education, and for placing all educational activities under the purview of a single ministry are essentially administrative proposals. They emphasize the virtues of articulation and efficiency and, once more, depend in no way upon Worth's view of the good society. When Dr. Worth turns to the question of the development of Alberta universities (pp. 82-87) his recommendations for the various institutions come to little more than saying, "Stay as you are." His specific guideline for The University of Calgary is no more than a pious platitude

> This institution too, must strive for excellence in a few areas rather than continuing to expand program offerings or to perpetuate outmoded ones. (p. 85)

It is ironic that after all his talk of futures perspectives, value system and learning modes, his recommendations pertaining to the university echo the same fears and limits of view that have persisted since objections were raised to the medieval universities presuming to branch into fields other than theology, law and medicine.

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[3]Worth's hope that education can compensate for cultural disadvantage seems wildly optimistic in view of the inconclusive, and often negative, findings reported in such studies as J. Coleman, *Equality of Educational Opportunity,* United States Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Office of Education, 1966; and Harry L. Miller and Roger Woock, *Social Foundations of Urban Education,* Dryden Press, Hinsdale, Illinois, 1970. Post-dating Worth, but based on a review of the research findings which Worth should have considered before uttering his declaration, is Mary Jo Bane and Christopher Jencks, "The Schools and Equal Opportunity," *Saturday Review of Education,* Vol. LV, No. 38, October, 1972. Two remarks indicate how directly counter to Worth's hopes are the findings of Jencks and his associates at the Center for Educational Policy Research, Harvard University.

> Thus, even if we went beyond "equal opportunity" and allocated resources disproportionately to schools whose students now do worst on tests and are least likely to acquire credentials, this would not improve these students' prospects very much. (p. 40)

> These findings imply that school reform is never likely to have any significant effect on the degree of inequality among adults. (p. 41)

Dr. Worth is properly concerned about the mounting costs of Alberta's universities, and there is a real danger that they have become too much committed to established patterns of institutional development. The platitudes and generalities offered in the Report do not afford effective guidance in face of these dangers.

I would finally suggest that there is a great danger in Dr. Worth's report. If his purely administrative recommendations and his suggestions to carry on with what has already begun (in Alberta or elsewhere) are accepted as a comprehensive and sufficient set of proposals, the danger is that the government might move ahead to create new administrative structures and even to establish the Alberta Academy and not realize that it was only making minor alterations to the existing system. While there is nothing wrong with minor alterations in themselves, it would be wrong if the government and people accepted them under the misapprehension that they were fundamental educational reforms. I, therefore, hope that readers of the Report will not be so overwhelmed by the fuzzy theory and the fashionable rhetoric as to fail to understand that in its actual recommendations the Report is conservative and very limited. Readers must also realize that specific recommendations require to be examined with much care because Dr. Worth has so far failed to make a convincing case.