

## COMMUNICATIONS

In the December, 1972, issue of your journal you published a review by Robert M. Stamp of the first five volumes of my recent series, *Ontario's Educative Society*. The completed work, the remainder of which was released in November, 1972, consisted of seven volumes, along with a companion volume, *Education: Ontario's Preoccupation*.

I take no exception to a reviewer's privilege of being as critical as he wishes. I feel, however, that one has a right to expect a little more regard for accuracy than Mr. Stamp has shown.

The view that I have given William G. Davis and, to a lesser degree, John P. Robarts unduly favourable treatment is of course legitimate. I would point out, however, that my assessment of the contributions of these two men was a reflection of the opinions of a great many key figures in education as well as my own. The description of Robarts as "a fresh breeze" was an informal quotation from someone in a good position to judge. As to Davis, one of his most prominent political opponents described him in a private conversation as probably the best minister of education Ontario ever had. The ultimate verdict could naturally be less enthusiastic.

I have the most vivid impressions of the contrast between the sixties and the decade before. However, anyone who bothers to read my appraisal of Davis in Volume II, pages 28 - 30, will discover that the praise is mixed with a few barbs. My editors also felt that my account of developments almost throughout Volume V reflects adversely on Davis' management of the educational system. In presenting the whole series as a hymn of praise to Davis, Mr. Stamp grossly distorts the facts. Most of the contents of the series have nothing to do with Davis at all.

Mr. Stamp takes exception to the way Dr. Dunlop was treated, and incorrectly attributes my criticism of him as centring on "his stress on the fundamentals" and on his alleged mishandling of the elementary teacher shortage. Again, a cursory reading of the relevant sections will show that I gave full recognition to the difficulties resulting from the combination of high rates of birth and immigration and an unusually small number in the age group from which teachers had to be drawn. However, Dunlop deserved and got criticism for denying that a teacher shortage existed at a time when it was actually most acute, and for claiming that, in lowering standards of qualifications for teachers, he was not lowering teacher quality. On these points nothing that I wrote condemns him more devastatingly than quotations from his own speeches.

Some other aspects of the review are a considerably greater cause for concern. It is very hard, for example, to accept as objective the verdict that "we still await an objective assessment of the 'Davis years' in Ontario education" based on the first five volumes of an eight-volume series. No doubt Mr. Stamp found the last three volumes entirely predictable. If he ever does bother to read them it is to be hoped that he will do so with sufficient care to avoid some of the inaccuracies of his initial review. For example, he characterizes Volume V as "largely a tribute to Fleming's own institution, the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education." In fact, only two of the twenty-one chapters in this volume deal with the institute. He finds teachers being slighted in the series. In fact, in addition to innumerable incidental references, the affairs of school teachers at different levels are the specific theme of one of the seven chapters of Volume I, two of the fourteen chapters of Volume III, nine of the twenty-one chapters of Volume V, and one of the twenty-four chapters of Volume VII. Much of the remainder of Volumes III and a large part of Volume VI provide examples of the incidental treatment of teachers' concerns. On the basis of a reference to a chapter in Volume V entitled "Radio and Television," he accuses the series of concentrating on the use of these media for formal instructional purposes and ignoring their broader educational role. He seems to have missed Chapter 8 in Volume III entitled "Educational Media." If he can find only one paragraph on the social and psychological barriers to university attendance, he might read Chapters 9 and 12 of Volume IV with more care.

In my overwhelming concentration on Davis, I am accused of slighting, among others, such figures as Claude Bissell, Murray Ross, Lloyd Dennis, and Walter Pitman. In fact, the references to Bissell take up most of page 765 in the index to Volume IV, and include numerous quotations. This space is only a little less than Davis gets in the same volume, and considerably less than Robarts. Murray Ross is referred to ten times in that volume. According to the index to Volume III, Lloyd Dennis is referred to specifically five times. Much the longest chapter in that volume is devoted to a detailed treatment of the Hall-Dennis report, which may be regarded as a recognition of his work. My high regard for certain opposition critics such as Walter Pitman is indicated by my frequent references to their views on what was happening during the period. Pitman is referred to or quoted five times in Volume II, six times in Volume III, four times in Volume IV, seven times in Volume V, once in Volume VII, and twice in Volume VIII. This is what Mr. Stamp considers overlooking such figures.

The charge that schools, colleges, universities, local school boards and the provincial department are given overwhelming attention is equally in the realm of fantasy. There are extensive sections on public libraries, manpower programs, training in private industry, educative activities of provincial and federal government agencies of all kinds, and a whole volume on private and semi public associations. It is true that I consciously drew the line at certain informal educational influences such as those within the family, travel, etc., but their existence was recognized in a number of places.

The review contains other ridiculous inaccuracies, but I think these examples are enough to make my point. I welcome scholarly criticism based on a real acquaintance with my work, but this is something altogether different.

W. G. Fleming  
O.I.S.E.

#### Rejoinder to Professor Fleming's Letter

Professor Fleming is quite right — I did not go through *Ontario's Educative Society* with tape-measure in hand, adding up the number of lines and the number of index references devoted to particular persons and events. In a short review of a lengthy work, the reviewer must content himself with conveying impressions gained from a careful reading. Further reading of the eight volumes has confirmed my original impressions — that the criticism of William Dunlop and the glorification of John Robarts and William Davis need tempering; that there is an undue emphasis on institutional aspects of schooling; an emphasis on structure and an unfortunate neglect of process; and, finally, a concern for quantitative growth rather than the quality of education dispensed. Fleming maintains that most of these impressions are inaccurate and/or unscholarly. We must agree to disagree on their validity.

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