

EDITORIAL

NO ONE HAS ARRIVED

As I reflect on the past twenty-five years of Canadian public school education, I am concerned that the creative passions of the educational leaders of the 50's and 60's have developed into the pragmatic politics of the 70's. The two great visions of education's future — the Royal Commissions in Ontario and Alberta — have dissolved as dewdrops during the early dawn of new government policies. This is not to lay the blame of today's ills solely at the door of provincial legislatures, since we all shared in the blurring of the vision. However, there is mounting evidence that the solutions to present problems reside in action by political organizations: legislatures, trustee and teacher organizations. Reflection on the significant achievements of the past two decades would indicate that almost every sub-system within the educational enterprise profited, but not to the same extent and perhaps least of all the students. This is not to say that increased programs and course offerings in both public and post-secondary educational institutions did not have merit, nor that the improved economic status of teachers and professors was not long overdue, but rather that we may have forgotten something along the way — the humanity of our students.

One of the articles in this issue states "children are achieving anonymity because of circumstances in the home and organizational patterns of the school." The research of Merton P. Strommen describes the five cries of youth as the cry of self-hatred, of psychological orphans, of social protest, of prejudice and lastly of joy.¹ His concern is not so much the changes in the nature of the cry from those of previous generations, but in the significant increase in the intensity of the cries.

May we not ask that in our demands for more of everything — salary, security, academic freedom — we have turned inward to the satisfaction of our own individual or professional group needs and lessened our concerns for the expressed needs of our students? Whereas, a generation ago, students graduating from school could readily name and vividly describe many teachers and professors who had "touched" them, few students today even have an expectation of the experience. We have tended to apply the research of psychology and sociology to a better understanding of "what is wrong with Johnny?" rather than to a better understanding of "who is Johnny?"

However, just at the time we realized a change in direction was required, we find that the situational factors affecting the change process have themselves changed. Decreasing student population, increased pupil mobility, high unemployment, decline in upward mobility for job advancement have caused an increasing concern for self. The creative leaders of the past are fast disappearing — few have the courage to continue alone. Visions are left to committees to develop, and each group demands assurance of equal participation — in all but the final responsibility or accountability.

I believe we have reaped the results of having "arrived." There is complacency — a high degree of comfort in the majority of our educational institutions and organizations — a sense of having won all the major conflicts of

¹Merton P. Strommen, *Five Cries of Youth* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1974).

the recent past. Those distressing demands of higher expectations described in the visions of recent years have been dismissed as really not worth the fight. We have turned to combat lesser forces — those opposed to lower class size and increased security of tenure.

Education for the 80's needs individuals who have been "touched" — individuals who have a vision, individuals who have realized that no one has "arrived." There are signs that increasing numbers of teachers, responding to the cries of their students, are shifting the major emphasis of their teaching from content achievement to growth in human development, to a greater sense of community, to service. A vision of the future is becoming more defined, as the disillusionment of the western world's recent scandals pass into history. The increasing enrollment of undergraduates and graduates in religious studies, the increasing demands of parents and students for value-oriented course content, the influences of Kohlberg, Simon and Fowler hold hope for the future. Attempts by local school staffs, together with their parents and pupils, to experience community rather than describe or discuss it has significant implications.

The decentralization of decision-making in curriculum and allocation of resources, both human and financial, has spurred development for a better sense of community. The hope for the future is that these communities not become inner-directed as in the past but evidence deep commitment for the growth of others.

So run my dream
And what am I?
An infant, crying in the night
An infant, crying for the light,
And with no language but a cry?

from "In Memoriam"

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