

EDITORIAL

For over a century it seems that mediocrity, like mildew has crept across our nation and the continent. Even Hollywood has recently produced an impressive tribute to the patron saints of mediocrity in its film, "Amadeus". Its message is no less poignant than the chastisements and warnings in the corpus of educational criticism of which the following are only a few contributions.

Faculties of Education and the teaching profession have always been beset by surveys, reports, critiques, commissions and other forms of post-mortems and soul searching. Neither have universities escaped the jaundiced eyes of intellectual watchdogs. *A Nation at Risk* (1983) has its own antecedents. Leonard Ayres, *Laggards in Our Schools* (1869) immediately comes to mind. Over a century ago Ayres feared that a nation's youth was petrified, embalmed, dessicated, sterilized, Miltonized and Virgilized; just as humanistic educators today fear that the student has been impersonalized, computerized, psychologized, diagnostized and nationalized.

Neither has Canada been remiss in contributing to the genre for Hilda Neatby feared no less when she wrote *So Little for the Mind* (1953), a scathing indictment of a progressive education that had become vulgarized beyond recognition. This year Canada has produced *The Great Brain Robbery* by Bercuson, Bothwell, and Granatstein, and it too is in a respectable tradition that criticises tertiary education. However, whether it will be placed beside such renowned thinkers as John Henry Newman who wrote *The Idea of a University* (1852), Thorstein Veblen, *The Higher Learning in America* (1918), as well as the works of Robert Hutchins and James Conant is another matter.

The April 1984 issue of this journal commented in its Forum section on *A Nation at Risk* just as the Forum section in the current issue addresses the conflict between institutional constraints and creative scholarship. The reconciliation of the theory and practice of teaching will be addressed in a forthcoming Special Issue (April, 1985) which will bring together the proceedings from a recent conference called "The Right Blend." We hope that these pieces - in recent issues and future issues - will provoke discussion. Indeed we welcome the continuation of a debate whose seriousness is not lessened by the perennial nature of the problems.

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Editor