

Romanow calls for more accountability

(SASKATOON) — Former Saskatchewan Attorney General Roy Romanow has called on federal and provincial governments to cooperate more closely with arriving at policy decisions on the future development of Canadian universities.

Romanow said that "in-

stead of reaching inter-governmental agreements behind closed doors, without involving and without answering to the Canadian public, intergovernmental relations must become more open and more accountable". He suggested that the Council of Ministers of

Education, Canada (CMEC) — the group of provincial ministers responsible for university education — should invite representatives from the federal government and the university community to sit in on their discussions.

He said the CMEC should encourage greater public

participation in developing higher education policies by holding public hearings and by becoming more accountable to provincial legislatures and Parliament.

Romanow made the remarks at a public forum on university accessibility held in conjunction with the annual meeting of the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada. The association represents 71 universities and degree-granting colleges. It was meeting at the University of Saskatchewan to mark the university's 75th anniversary celebrations.

Romanow told his audience, including university executive heads from across Canada that "universities must provide accessibility to higher education to all persons who desire higher learning and whose contribution to Canadian life can be significantly enhanced by that education".

Said Romanow, "Society should do all that it reasonably can to ensure that accessibility to university is widened and guaranteed."

Shelley Munro, Former President of the University of Winnipeg Students' Association, told the gathering that "no person should be denied access to postsecondary studies for financial reasons" and that "our intellec-

tual heritage not be the exclusive birthright of the socially and economically fortunate".

Munro called on universities to adopt uniform admission standards based on mandatory literacy exams and to institute a core curriculum of studies. She

argued against differential fees for foreign students saying "the intellectual community must promote harmony and fellowship" and that "the disadvantage of these fees far outweighs the financial savings" they might bring governments.

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little extra to offer. It is worth noting these programs sprang to life as a reaction to eons of WASP male dominated courses by snobbish scholars — like these three — who do not consider them "intellectually worthy."

And it's a pity — not to mention unprofessional — that professors Granatstein, Bothwell and Bercuson did not treat their chosen topic as they do their individual pieces of historical scholarship.

The **Great Brain Robbery** consists mainly of three paragons of academic virtue fantasizing about a past that never was and sloughing off the real reasons Canadian universities are on the road to ruin — underfunding, cutbacks, and federal-provincial disputes — and substituting them with unsubstantiated accusations that students and faculty are to blame for governments' flawed policies.

As CAUT's Savage sums up: "Their charges that students and faculty have gone to hell in a handcart in the past 15 years are simply not true."

We can only hope the historians' shrill, breathless rhetoric has not added too much fuel to the cutbacks fire that is stroked by the likes of Pat McGeer in British Columbia and Bette Stephenson in Ontario. And we see a glimmer of good in **The Great Brain Robbery** is alarmist enough to get a wide variety of people thinking about the issue and contributing in a more scholarly way to the much needed debate on accessibility and funding.

Besides, after 35 years in the classroom, these three men still have a lot to learn about Canada's university system. And that's another reason why university doors should remain wide open — so all, rich or poor, polemical or revolutionary can keep on learning.

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