

Corporations

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federal government seems to be pushing academics towards the business world faster than university.

Ottawa's panel on the Commercialization of University Research was tabled last May for the Prime Minister's Advisory Council on Science and Technology.

The panel recommended universities, via tenure and promotion policies, encourage faculty to engage in commercially viable re-

search. As well, the report suggested that federal granting councils consider profit potential as a criterion for awarding research grants.

In the recent Speech from the Throne, the federal government restated its priority of making money off of intellectual property.

The government will "find new markets for new products and services developed through research by universities," said Prime Minister Jean Chrétien.

The question, however, is to what extent should

universities pursue these corporate objectives.

In other words, will the humanities lose to the sciences in this new search for corporate dollars? "[Commercialization] jeopardizes socially and culturally valuable research that may not be profitable, while encouraging research that makes money for the private sector but may be trivial," said Bill Graham, president of the Canadian Association of University Teachers.

Peter Desbarats, the

former Dean of Journalism at the University of Western Ontario, told the *Globe & Mail* last June he was constrained by corporations.

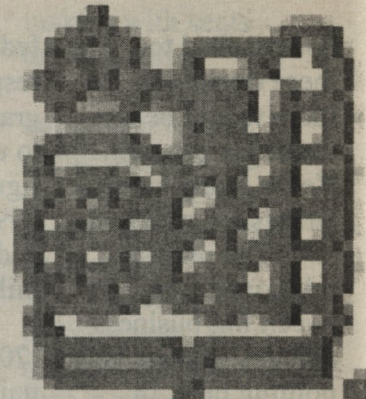
As Dean, he had refused to comment on Rogers Communications' controversial takeover of Maclean Hunter in 1995 because Rogers had endowed his Faculty of Information Studies with a \$1 million chair.

When corporations fund research, certain directives and stipulations may be issued - the most serious infringement on

academic freedom possible. This has been seen in profitable areas of research, such as health sciences.

The story of Dr. Nancy Olivieri, a professor at Pediatrics and Medicine at the University of Toronto, is a clear example of this potential violation of academic freedom. Olivieri worked in the early 1990s at Toronto's Hospital for Sick Children studying a drug for the treatment of thalassemia, a rare blood disorder.

She was



funded by the pharmaceutical giant Apotex and had agreed not to publish her results without their consent. She discovered that in the long-term the drug was not beneficial and, in some instances, even harmful.

Sweatshops

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finding routine violations of the Employment Standard Act by contractors and subcontractors," she explained. "These workers are not being paid the guaranteed mini-

mum wage plus the 10 per cent increase, because they are working at home. None of them receive 4 per cent vacation pay, and none of the homeworkers we had interviewed ever received overtime pay."

UNITE has made two important recommendations to the federal government.

First, it demanded that Human Resources Development Canada be "proactive" and go to the companies and investigate rather than waiting for complaints to come forward. Second, UNITE recom-

mends that HRDC allow anonymous complaints, in order to encourage immigrant women to come forward and voice themselves.

"There is not very much protection under the present Employment Standard Act," warned Dagg. "It is a basic standard and does not guarantee these women's jobs if they file a complaint."

In 1996, the International Labour Organization (ILO) passed a convention on homeworkers that declared they had the right to organ-

ize and set international standards on decent working conditions.

Although Canada was present at the meeting, it did not ratify this convention because Ottawa said it dealt with provincial jurisdiction.

"Even though these standards are passed there is limited effectiveness if countries do not adopt them," said Dagg. "How do you strengthen international working standards if each country acts independently?"

Another strategy UNITE suggests is to place pressure on the manufacturers and

retailers.

"Those who own the label, or who own the rights to the product that is being made should be made liable and equally responsible for the working conditions under which it is being made," Dagg asserted.

The garment industry operates within a long chain of production, and it becomes very difficult to detect where the violations are being made, especially when there is a lot of blame shifting going on.

The retailers ultimately control the garment industry - they are the

one's that call the shots, and the maximum profit goes to them. Those at the bottom of the chain, the seamstresses, end up being exploited.

UNITE hopes that legal liability will force retailers to take responsibility

"If your name is on it, then you are responsible for how it is made!" Dagg insisted.

Students are also getting involved in the anti-sweatshop battle.

The University of Toronto's own action group, Students Against Sweatshops (SAS), was formed in the fall of 1998. Ian

