

EDITORIAL

The current academic year has seen many changes, not the least of which is the transformation of the McGill Institute of Education into the Faculty of Education. This metamorphosis is partly reflected in the creation of the Faculty's *McGill Journal of Education*, replacing the Institute's *Bulletin*. The Faculty hopes that the *Journal*, building upon the work of its predecessor, will provide a useful service to the educational fraternity as a whole and especially to our colleagues in the Province of Quebec. We hope it will serve as a stimulus for educational discussion, a forum for ideas, an outlet for research, and a meeting ground for theoreticians and those engaged — at all levels — in the practical business of teaching.

We expect to publish in the Spring and Fall each year and plan that each number will emphasize a particular theme. This, the first issue, focuses on Activism, an essential doctrine of the Parent Royal Commission of Inquiry on Education which, as all Quebec knows, is sparking a revolution in education in this Province. It is accelerating the pace of educational change but, as a number of our contributors suggest, not Activism, nor change, nor even educational revolution is really new. Yet they write with a fresh enthusiasm of Activism and the changes it must bring.

Dean Wayne Hall in his paper, "The Teacher in the Activist School," points out that long before any Activist creed was explicitly enunciated, some teachers used Activist principles. He isolates a number of these principles — for example, "Activism is dedicated to the unfolding of the potential of the pupil" — and interprets them within the context of modern Quebec and the recommendations of the Parent Report. Prof. Richard Whitwell extols the excitement of the discovery approach to mathematics; Prof. Roland Wensley suggests how, through the organization of ideas, history may be released from the *rigor mortis* of the textbook; Dr. Chris Hawkins calls for action in language learning in a spritely essay, unequivocally entitled "Jump in the Lake."

However, a canny note of caution is sounded as Dr. Gerald McKay points out the fallacy of having "simplistic faith that good results naturally accrue from activity methods." Dr. Norman France also warns that activity teaching techniques

require different methods of examining and that the old assumptions of schooling need to be reassessed. Dr. Gault Finley, in outlining some of its antecedents, may shatter an illusion that Activism is a modern North American invention. Prof. Munroe considers that the difficult and demanding task of the contemporary teacher is "to redefine the humanities, to revitalise language, to redirect mathematics, to redesign the applications of natural science, most of all to deepen our knowledge of man himself and teach him to live with his fellows."

Our contributors would all agree that the modern teacher's responsibilities are neither static nor light. We live, after all, in the jet age, an age when change is so accelerated that even biological adaptation cannot keep pace, when the phenomenon of jet-lag causes the most abstemious air traveller to suffer physiological hangover as he arrives in Istanbul, or Rome, or Djakarta, his body rhythms still tied to Montreal time. The world of pedagogy is particularly susceptible to lag — cultural lag or intellectual lag. Dr. Marshall McLuhan shows a new perspective on this old problem by pin-pointing the absurdity of a new generation's "being instructed and guided by people for whom the receding mechanical and fragmented world is the prime reality. It is as though astronauts could only be launched by veterans of the Boer War." McLuhan, whose *Understanding Media* is reviewed in these pages by Dr. Monika Kehoe, notes man's propensity to revere the past and claims that "human power to deal with any present reality is minimal. To have discovered this is a huge step towards by-passing this human limitation."

We hope that these views and findings will help clarify the concept of Activism, give some appreciation of its great potential, and expose some of its far-flung ramifications. We hope, too, that they will make this issue of the *McGill Journal of Education* satisfying and stimulating.

M. G.

Next Issue: LANGUAGE LEARNING.