WITH JAMES L. TURK

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OUR UNIVERSITY TEACHERS ARE AT THE HEART OF MANY OF THE DEBATES RAGING ACROSS THE NATIONAL EDUCATIONAL SPECTRUM. IN HIS WORDS, THE CAUT'S JAMES TURK ADDRESSES SEVERAL OF THE CRITICAL ISSUES OF THE DAY.

NOS PROFESSEURS D'UNIVERSITÉ SE RETROUVENT AU CŒUR DE PLUSIEURS DÉBATS QUI TRAVERSENT FURIEUSEMENT LE SPECTRE ÉDUCATIONNEL. EN SES MOTS, JAMES TURK DE L'ACPPU ADRESSE CERTAINES DES QUESTIONS CRITIQUES D'AUJOURD'HUI.

CITC You recently participated in the MUNFA walk-out at Memorial. Do you see the deterioration in the public sector collective bargaining process in Newfoundland as a unique development or indicative of a more widespread problem?

JT I would not describe what happened at Memorial as a "deterioration in the public sector collective bargaining process." Rather, underfunding and growing commercial pressure on university administrations to act as if they were private sector corporations are creating an increasingly difficult bargaining climate.

CITC Is faculty shortage a major concern today?

JT Yes. The anticipated increase in enrolment due to the echo of the baby boom and the large number of faculty retirements over the coming decade will create an unusual problem. Our concern is that university administrators will deal with this problem in the same way as their industrial counterparts — by expanding their use of casual labour (there has already been a skyrocketing use of part-time faculty) and by using technology to replace people. The hundreds of millions being spent on online technologies in this era of underfunding suggests administrations are looking to the technology, not as a supplement to face-to-face teaching, but as a replacement for it.

CITC What is your counsel to those pursuing doctoral degrees in the hope of joining the ranks of university teachers?

JT I would encourage them to pursue their studies, if that is their interest and passion. There will be a lot of job opportunities, and good ones if we can prevent the casualization of the profession and the inappropriate use of labour-replacing technologies.



CITC New technologies are changing the face of the world, and our universities are undergoing profound changes themselves. What effect will technology have on post-secondary education and, in particular, how will on-line degrees alter the relationship between teacher an student?

JT Online technologies are a wonderful supplement to the classroom, but a poor substitute for it. The problem is not the technology but its use. The quality of post-secondary education will suffer greatly if students are denied classroom experiences.

CITC Corporate desire to be involved in the shaping of university research and training is on the rise. Does this pose any particular dangers to our students or should their financial support be welcomed?

JT It poses grave dangers to the integrity of research and scholarship. Growing corporate involvement in research steers that

research toward topics that offer commercial promise. This means diverting attention away from issues of social importance that lack the possibility of leading to corporate profit, e.g., research on the causes and effects of child poverty, or cultural research on the history of modern dance. In the natural sciences, it means turning increasingly away from basic science — which is the foundation for most of the advances in the 20th century.

CITC You have criticized the federal Canada Research Chairs (CRC) Program, which promises $900 million to cash-starved universities. Why?

JT The CRC program allocates chairs in a way that will create two tiers of Canadian universities — a handful of well-endowed research universities and a large number of poorly endowed regional and smaller universities. Nine universities will get almost 60% of the chairs. This is the result of a narrow definition of research that serves as the basis for the allocation of chairs. Further, the CRC program threatens university autonomy by giving an external, government-appointed body veto power over the hiring of all external chairs. With more than a decade of core university funding being cut back, it is irresponsible to pour $900-million into the CRC program rather than provide core funding that will allow all universities to try to maintain the quality of education they provide their students.

CITC Do you see Ontario's Bill 132 as the leading edge of a new more conservative wave in education?

JT It is one of many indicators from the Ontario government of its lack of commitment to an open, accessible, high-quality public education system.

CITC The Ontario government has claimed that Bill 132 will give students greater choice and improve the quality of their education. What is the danger?

JT The Bill will harm the quality of post-secondary education in Ontario by draining scarce public funds away from Ontario's existing and excellent public system. The private institutions that will come to Ontario will primarily be either for-profit outfits like Phoenix and DeVry that will try to skim off profitable courses or land development deals posing as universities like the decade old proposal for a private university in Queensville.

CITC The Canadian political landscape appears to have shifted considerably to the right over the last decade. Do you see a vacuum on the left, or centre-left, from where there has traditionally been greater vocal support for public funding of key social programs?

JT Polls show there is still strong public support for public education and public health care.

CITC Political parties today must deal with a population demanding both a lightening of their tax burden and improved social programs. Will education be caught in the middle or can these competing desires be reconciled in the best interests of Canada's educational systems?

JT The demand for tax cuts is being led by the corporate sector. Polls consistently show that when given a choice between tax cuts and improved public services, a majority of Canadians opt for the latter.

CITC Is it still a 'publish or perish' world for university teachers?

JT Yes.

CITC Is student debt a serious threat to the future of university education?

JT It is not only a threat to the accessibility of our education system, it will be an increasing economic problem as a generation of graduates will not be able to buy homes or engage in other economic activities because of huge student loan debts.

CITC Are Canadian university teachers optimistic about their future?

JT I think teachers are an optimistic lot. We live in a rich country that has the capability of having a first-rate public education system that is genuinely accessible. We have a majority of Canadians who want such a system. It is a matter of developing the political will to realize such a priority. I believe we can do it.

FACULTY SALARIES – CANADA (CDN $)

	1992-1993	1997-1998	1998-1999
All Faculty	*77 991*	*75 075*	*76 284*
Full professor	93 595	89 226	90 464
Associate professor	75 461	70 576	71 943
Other ranks	57 451	56 308	57 523

*Statistics Canada, Education Quarterly Review, 2000, Vol. 7, No. 1, p. 47

U.S. FACULTY SALARIES (U.S. $)

ACADEMIC RANK	PUBLIC	PRIVATE*
All faculty	*54 114 $*	*54 443 $*
Professor	69 195 $	72 747 $
Associate Professor	51 732 $	50 701 $
Assistant professor	42 582 $	41 357 $
Instructor	31 519 $	32 325 $
Lecturer	34 516 $	38 376 $
No rank	38 614 $	39 385 $

* Private, not-for-profit institions only
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, NCES 2000-062