REVIEW ESSAY/ESSAI RENDU

Anxious Academics: Mission Drift and Sliding Standards in the Modern Canadian University

James Côté and **Anton L. Allahar**, *Ivory Tower Blues: A University System in Crisis*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007, 256 pp., $27.95 paper (978-0-80209-182-2), $60.00 hardcover (978-0-80209-181-4).

George Fallis, *Multiversities, Ideas, and Democracy*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007, 424 pp., $65.00 hardcover (978-0-80209-240-3).

James Côté and Anton L. Allahar's *Ivory Tower Blues: A University System in Crisis* and George Fallis's *Multiversities, Ideas, and Democracy* are among the latest books to discuss the discontents faced by "the Canadian University." An economist and former Dean of the Faculty of Arts at York University, Fallis investigates big themes. He makes a good case for linking the university mission to citizenship and democracy and writes about the issues with a sense of their complexity and importance. Côté and Allahar are sociologists from the University of Western Ontario and their *Ivory Tower Blues* paints a much smaller, bleaker picture about undergraduate education, specifically. While their critique is sometime compelling, their analysis of the root causes of this educational "crisis" drifts into ideological fundamentalism with little regard for historical evidence.

TROUBLE IN THE IVORY TOWER? MAPPING THE LANDSCAPE

Canadian public universities are sustained by government commitment to accessible mass education, yet they are a bewildering set of organizations so it may be useful to provide a rough snapshot of the university

and the social benefits that are being claimed on its behalf. There are 76 universities in Canada, 12 of which can be called "multiversities": large institutions with an average of 22,000 students and substantial commitment to research, large graduate programs, and professional training. Another 15 universities, each with an average of 13,000 students, make up a second group of comprehensive national universities with graduate, research, and professional programs, albeit on a smaller scale than the multiversities. The rest are primarily undergraduate institutions, usually with a much stronger emphasis on teaching.[1] Considering postsecondary education more broadly, we can add to this picture the 206 community colleges and other applied institutions that are part of the English and French systems. Included here are the "polytechnics" that their promoters market as a "third way" of postsecondary education.[2] The PSE sector services over one million postsecondary students, and Canadian students entering postsecondary education represent one of the largest proportions in the world.

Within the next decade, Canadian universities will likely undergo substantial changes. Not only are student numbers predicted to go up by 6 percent, but it is estimated that 22,000 of current full-time faculty are set to retire.[3] The average age of a university professor is 49, compared to 42 a decade ago. Women faculty continue to be underrepresented, even though women constitute 60 percent of the undergraduate student population. Despite advances in student participation over the past fifty years — 41 percent of the current population has some form of postsecondary education, half university degrees, and half community college diplomas — one in seven Canadian students (15 percent) drop out of their postsecondary studies. Underrepresentation continues to be an issue for Aboriginal peoples, some people of colour, and people from lower socioeconomic classes. University education is still restricted, and increasingly expensive.

As for the benefits of an university education, the research shows general trends but little equanimity. Does a university degree lead to better jobs, higher income, more civic involvement, more democratic en-

---

1. The different categorizations of Canadian universities can be found in Fallis, p. 76.

2. For a look at the ways in which polytechnics have positioned themselves as a "third way" model for postsecondary education see the "Report on Colleges" section in *Globe and Mail*, Nov. 5, 2007, and especially Elizabeth Church, "One-stop shopping for post-secondary students" F1. See also Alec Bruce, "Big deal: Some say commercial interests have infiltrated higher education. So what if they have?" *Atlantic Business* Nov/Dec. 2007:44–53.

3. Elizabeth Church, "A hiring boom hits campuses as half of faculty is set to retire," *Globe and Mail*, Nov. 19, 2007:A7.

gagement, and even transformational character changes? The answer to these questions is probably yes but it is wise to be cautious. The problem with these kinds of research is that the variables that social scientists try to measure are decidedly not monocausal. Few empirical studies, moreover, are rigorous enough to make even the most modest claims about any of these issues. Social scientists have had a field day trying to push pet theories that might bring focus and clarity to the situation.

CRISIS OF AUTHORITY AND THE IVORY TOWER

Ivory Tower Blues is a book with a pet theory. According to the authors, there is a crisis in the Ivory Tower that can be attributed partly to sliding standards and partly to the large presence of disengaged students whom they portray, as in *Gulliver's Travels,* as oversized children trying to extract sunshine from cucumbers. Their other and perhaps more important argument is that many young people are unwisely pushed to go to university because of societal pressures towards credentialism and misguided government policies which oversell the economic benefits of university education.

Côté and Allahar provocatively draw our attention to grade inflation and student disengagement, and some of what they say about these issues will strike a chord with many professors, especially those who experience tensions between teaching and research. Student engagement is monitored annually across the United States and increasingly in Canada by the National Survey of Student Engagement, also referred to as the Nessy. According to the Nessy, professors can expect 10 percent of postsecondary undergraduate students to be engaged and do the full amount of work professors expect, and 40 percent of students to do less than expected but enough to get by. Then there are the 40–50 percent disengaged students who do very little work at all. These figures are dispiriting, but whether they indicate a crisis depends on how one defines the purpose of the modern university. Is it an "ivory tower," a High Church of scholarship where serious focussed reflection is done? Is the university a centre of research for the production of new knowledge? Is it an agent of social change and transformation? Or maybe all of these? The authors spend little time sorting out these possibilities, settling instead on a narrative about the ivory tower as High Church and mourning a lost glorious past.

Ivory Tower Blues does not discuss in any significant way the university in relation to women, visible minorities, people from lower socio-economic classes, or new immigrants, nor how each of these groups

brings new challenges and changes to the university. Nor do the authors discuss the economic restraints facing universities, which have seen increased student numbers, nonreplacement of retired faculty, increased reliance on contract academic staff, fewer course choices for students, shabby classrooms, and a crushing work load for professors. All of these make the university classroom experience less appealing than in the past.

Instead, *Ivory Tower Blues* settles for a pop sociological abstraction called the "millennial generation," a homogeneous group of students born in the early 1980s who are claimed to share similar values and attitudes, in which disengagement is argued (without convincing evidence) to be extremely common. The term is borrowed from Neil Howe and William Strauss's 2003 book *Millennials Go to College,* which portrays this generation of students as special, sheltered, confident, team-oriented, conventional, pressured, and achieving. They experienced strong parental pressure to remain in school and are coddled by K–12 educational institutions more than willing to keep them in the system through grade inflation and social promotion.

The "millennial generation" is a caricature drawn from market research that Côté and Allahar mistake as an accurate portrait of a generation which is the product of a wider feel-good, materialistic, consumerist society.

> Unlike earlier generations that had to put out the effort to read to acquire information, the current generation is one that with little effort can "click on" for information. Practice and experience in reading and writing, and the analytic skills they impart, are today eclipsed by the seductive technology of personal computers, video games, iPods and MP3 players, movies on DVDs, and similar pursuits that do not expand one's vocabulary, do not teach punctuation or grammar, do not stimulate the imagination, and do not cultivate an appreciation for intellectual culture among young people today.... (p. 105)

The indictment of modern, uninformed students slouching towards university credentials is part of a familiar neoconservative critique of a liberal university education. Greater accessibility to university education, so the argument goes, has enabled people with less ability and interest to enter the academy and this, in conjunction with a permissive liberal culture and new communications technology, has produced a new generation of clueless youth and contributed to the declining quality of schooling. The traditional conception of a university as a home for critical contemplation, where literacy and reading great books are cherished, has been eclipsed by soft and aimless mollycoddling.

The authors claim that the millennial generation, sheltered by over-protective parents and possessed of weak interior lives, enter university with high expectations and a strong sense of entitlement. But they are decidedly not up to scratch. When one compares students from the millennial generation with earlier generations of students the differences in quality are obvious, and to support their contention they rely on a small selection of anecdotes told by old colleagues and deans who stand in for "institutional memory." Unsurprisingly, they all agree that the ivory tower has lost its lustre. Students are ill-prepared, expect high grades, and view education as a form of degree purchase rather than a quest for knowledge.

The authors first of all blame high school for inflating grades and contributing to a cult of self-esteem that guarantees a B to almost any student. Beyond that they blame "political correctness" and the "democratization of education" for opening the doors of academe to large numbers in the 1960s and 1970s, consequently watering down the curriculum. When gender studies, African studies, and postmodernism crept into course calendars they politicized the academy, undermined the authority of Western thought and weakened the traditional curriculum of the Liberal Arts. Côté and Allahar quote approvingly from Harvard's neoconservative scholar and Tocqueville expert Harvey C. Mansfield, who, like Allan Bloom, is a leading Straussian and defender of the old curriculum based on great books. In 2001 Mansfield, dubbed "C minus Mansfield" by many of his Harvard students, published in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* a well received article on grade inflation and pusillanimous academics who pander to students' expectations and compromise academic standards and virtue.

Côté and Allahar make use of Mansfield's authority several times throughout their book to raise the alarm about educational decline. Through a succession of discursive linkages the authors conclude that the "deep and engaged" learning that used to be found in higher education has given way to the "dumbing down" of the university curriculum, to minimal work on the part of students, and to job stress among a professoriate pestered by combative undergraduates who want the higher grades they were accustomed to receiving in high school. All this leads to a "disengagement pact": professors are more than willing to give students a good grade in return for good student evaluations if students will only leave them alone.

These ideas play well in some quarters because they feed into the anxieties of many parents and students. Côté and Allahar are more than happy to ratchet up unease and then play concerned therapists offering advice both to parents who must deal with high university tuition, and

to students who may have "misaligned ambitions" and might be better off in trade schools where they could better use their talents. Are there students that many professors feel should have found an alternative to university? Of course there are, and some of the policy recommendations Côté and Allahar suggest, such as a year off for travel, go a long way to addressing some of these issues. But they smugly dish out a troubling paternalistic "tough love," constructing through simplification and selective use of evidence a broken university system suffering a crisis of authority and populated by students of such feeble interior character that a firmer policy needs to be put in place to "sort," "weed," and "cool out" those who have no business being in university.

The current university is unquestionably different from the university of the 1970s, when Côté and Allahar began teaching. The student mix is more varied and the learning environment is more complex than when the "one size fits all" pedagogical model prevailed. An elite system of education is concerned with educating only a small fraction of its citizenry. A mass system of education will enrol a more sizeable proportion. The two are vastly different systems but the mass system of education must deal with a nettlesome contradiction. The university is inherently elitist because it demands the best from its students, but it is also inclusionary and the policy of accessibility is part of a democratic experiment which on balance has fared well, despite the cavils of its critics.

Perhaps it is best to put the kibosh to the idea that increasing participation in university has led to declining standards. If more people of less ability and motivation are now entering university then overall performance levels should be plummeting. I have already noted some of the difficulties of measuring educational output. D.W. Livingston insists, however, in *The Educational Job Gap* (1999), that the most rigorous and reliable studies have found that generally accepted indicators of educational performance are "either stable or gradually improving" (p. 22). More to the point, the performance of women, people from lower socio-economic classes, and visible minorities who were previously excluded from university education are not significantly different from that of the white middle class males who had formerly predominated.

Universities continue be places of serious thought where research is done, but they have evolved to allow more access to citizens and have been transformed into more welcoming places; they are still sites of intellectual wonder and discovery, and places where mistakes are made and second chances given. One may scorn this achievement as mollycoddling and soft, but because so many of Côté and Allahar's arguments are impressionistic and barely address the root causes of the multiple difficulties facing the modern university, it is doubtful that many of the

hard alternatives they suggest are suitable or advisable. When they summarily dismiss the modern "plug in" and "click on" student as a reluctant intellectual they show little understanding of how modern technology has revolutionized the process of teaching and learning. Technology has forced the university to ask new questions about how students learn and the role of the lecture. The classroom is now just one place where learning happens.

One fails students by underestimating them, and at heart *Ivory Tower Blues* is one extended complaint about a generation gone to seed and an educational institution that has lost its bearings and authority. There may be some truth to this characterization and we cannot slough off these anxieties, but the authors' ahistorical framing of the issues, their caricature of students, and their narrow perspective on the democratic mission of the modern university make it obvious that there is more rhetoric than solidity to this book.

Liberalism, the Multiversity and Citizenship

In *Multiversities, Ideas, and Democracy* George Fallis argues for the importance to a cosmopolitan democratic life of cultural ideas and the university. Much of Fallis's theoretical and political framework is informed by Daniel Bell's *The Coming of the Post-industrial Society* and Clark Kerr's *The Uses of the University*. Written in the middle of the Cold War, both are seminal texts which discuss the transformation of education and the economy and, like Fallis's own work, each is an attempt to consolidate certain liberal values at a time when liberal hegemony is undergoing important changes.

In Kerr's *The Uses of the University,* first delivered as a series of lectures at Harvard in 1963, this committed liberal thinker and first Chancellor of the University of California at Berkeley describes the purpose of the multiversity in glowing terms. Multiversities are, according to Kerr, large autonomous conglomerates which produce scientific and intellectual knowledge. They contribute immensely to the economy and national growth and are the site for ideas that will help win the Cold War. Three years later, in a series of talks at the same Harvard location, Noam Chomsky's "Responsibilities of Intellectuals" (1966) countered that, far from being autonomous, any university is part of a state system since it produces thinkers willing to ask narrow tactical questions and unwilling to criticize society at large. In a Faustian bargain, intellectuals trade their silence on real problems for affluence and influence in the running of the welfare state. The university is not a bastion of free critical thinkers,

concludes Chomsky, but simply another pillar of the establishment and the source of the technocrats who keep the state functioning.

Though Chomsky is never cited in Fallis's book, his criticisms of the failure of intellectuals and the role of the university as a servant of the Cold War state loom silently in the background. Although Fallis only partially addresses Chomsky's criticisms, he nonetheless presents an important and comprehensive liberal defence of the role of the university in the post-Cold War period. This book is essential reading for anyone concerned with the future of universities, democracy, or the anxieties and limitations of liberalism.

Fallis argues that the large multiversity is an essential research and knowledge institution connected to society in a social contract. In return for deference and autonomy the multiversity, like all universities, must accept its role as social critic and social conscience, which means it should be more than the state's moral and social regulator. Instead of being narrow technocrats, academics should aspire to be public intellectuals with an obligation to civilize debate and subvert consensus. Yet a good deal of what Fallis says in his book is designed to mend a frayed liberal consensus rather than seriously question it.

Since the collapse of the Berlin Wall and the end of the Cold War, argues Fallis, liberal societies and the multiversity are being confronted by new political challenges and are being transformed by numerous forces. His focus is on Anglo-American multiversities, as they share many traditions and are situated in similar liberal democratic societies. Globalization, argues Fallis, weakens the nation state's authority and many of the civic democratic rights associated with it. The university, historically associated with nation-building, is affected by internationalization by becoming a major route for the flow of students, faculty, and scientific knowledge, and a forum where national cultures clash and interact with each other. From its position at the centre of tensions between older and newer ideas of cosmopolitan democracy, the university is both a catalyst for globalization and shaped by it.

Information technology has sped up the process of globalization and transformed the pedagogical mission of the university. It puts pressure on the university to use digital technology to deliver services, leading either to the dystopian view of the university as digital diploma mill, or to a more utopian scenario where education can be tailored to the needs of students and be more student focussed and led. Either way, the balance between the oral and the literate in university education has been fundamentally changed. The potential of information technologies for democracy and education is touched upon only lightly by Fallis, not given the serious consideration it deserves.

The commercialization of education is the most worrying force for Fallis. The university was once considered outside the market but today seems fully integrated within it. Shifts in governmental policy that link funding to economic growth put pressure on the university to make close connections between research and the economy. This dynamic distorts the choice of research topics and moves professors away from curiosity-based research. At the same time, the discourse of business has infiltrated the running of the university. Students become consumers; universities are branded; there is pressure to sell education in utilitarian terms of job preparation and enriching human capital; business terminology and methods are increasingly used by the administration to run the university, weakening university governance and academic freedom. The university is threatened with becoming a research wing of big business and worst of all, the collaborative ideal that ideas and research are a public good for the benefit of all has shifted to the notion that private ideas and private research are the best way to advance knowledge.

The financially pinched welfare state adds further tensions to the university. Post-World War II governments accepted responsibility to provide full employment and encourage economic growth. As part of its democratic responsibility to its citizens, many Anglo-American countries made universities accessible to people who were capable and motivated. By the mid 1970s, however, the consensus supporting the welfare state fragmented and there was a shift in the balance of public and private. The state reduced its monetary commitments to university education even though the demand for services continued to increase, creating great financial burdens on postsecondary institutions. Caught in the pincer of declining government support and increasing needs, the university had to do more with less, and so it increased tuition fees and enlarged classes, with the unfortunate but predictable outcome of weakening the quality of undergraduate education.

The greatest danger to the university may be ideological, however, and here Fallis reveals his own cultural preferences as he girds for a fight against the twin evils of political correctness and postmodern thought. Daniel Bell once said famously that he is a socialist in economics, a liberal in politics, and a conservative in culture. On cultural matters Fallis is decidedly a conservative. Universities are there to transmit the cultural heritage of a western tradition. Fallis counterpoises modernity and western rational thought against an essentially irrational postmodernism. Postmodernism is seen as a Romantic movement which celebrates the emotions, and as the heir of an obsessively hyper-rational critical tradition stemming from the Enlightenment, in which all knowledge must be challenged, especially knowledge based on tradition, the nation, and re-

ligion. For Fallis and many conservative cultural theorists, postmodernism's epistemological nihilism undermines the coherence and purpose of liberal education, while political correctness disables and disempowers the authority of western tradition.

All these forces belonging to what Fallis calls "the character of our age" cause new strains on the multiversity, leading to dangerous "mission drift," and threatening the very inheritance of Western thought. Just when liberalism has achieved its greatest political triumph and claims to have reached an endpoint of sorts — think of Francis Fukuyama's *The End of History and the Last Man* — the university is experiencing its greatest trial: finding new anchors that will curtail the uncertainty and moral drift of our age. One of Fallis's concerns is how to keep the multiversity from being thoroughly politicized by political correctness. There is in his argument, however, an uncritical acceptance of the multiversity as a defender of "our" values, and it is worth examining more closely how this narrative is constructed, with an eye to what is being elided or excluded.

THE LIBERAL PLURALIST MULTIVERSITY: GOOD BALANCE AND BAD ADAPTATION

Multiversity, Idea and Democracy begins by mapping out the rise of the modern multiversity and defining its values. Fallis takes us on a panoramic journey from antiquity to the present and identifies some ideal-type milestones along the way. The story is a strange mixture of origin myth and liberal self-aggrandizement that stresses continuities between the past and the present. It does not dwell on discontinuities, and one finds little material on the democratic contributions to the university from below, such as the Free Speech Movement in Berkeley, the very multiversity over which Clark Kerr presided, that raised serious questions about the multiversity's autonomy and quiescence with Cold War politics and its relation to the American military industrial complex.

Fallis situates the multiversity as the site of a pluralistic balance of conflicting ideas. Cardinal Newman, for example, might take comfort that the multiversity continues to be a place to teach "universal knowledge" and its mission is to be a great moral force and train good members of society. The multiversity's support of professional schools finds validation in the concern of the mediaeval university with the needs of the local economy and professional education. The multiversity's support for accessibility and pragmatic adaptation to society and government has models in the Scottish and American land-grant traditions. Wilhelm von Humboldt and the tradition emanating from the University of Berlin would take heart in

the multiversity's insistence on an arm's length relationship with the state, and its disinterested and curiosity-driven focus on basic research. All of these ideas may be at odds with each other, says Fallis, but they coexist within the multiversity, often in furious, if managed, contention.

The danger now is "prodigal adaptation," argues Fallis. The multiversity is adapting all too well to the "character of age" and sacrificing some of its presumably contentious but well balanced core ideas. To prevent the multiversity from drifting even further into political fragmentation and commercialism, he recommends a "new social contract" that is stable enough to support the core ideals that gave birth to the multiversity but responsive enough to remain relevant to the society. He identifies a number of "pragmatic adaptations" suitable for this task. The first is to make the university an institution of democracy with a responsibility to contribute to democratic life. The second is a renewed attention to undergraduate liberal education whose new mission is preparing students for a cosmopolitan citizenship that takes account of the worth and dignity of all human beings.

The final section of the book is given over to recommendations about how undergraduate education could be revamped to shore up cosmopolitan liberal values. Fallis suggests that department-based universities provide a liberal education only in an indirect sense and he recommends that we allow students to take a more structured program: a minor in liberal education. He also wants a renewed emphasis on citizenship. He revisits the debates that have emerged in the past thirty years between the civic duties and obligations associated with the republican virtues tradition, and the liberal tradition which emphasizes rights. Like many contemporary communitarians he laments that the importance of community and responsibility has been downplayed and that the balance between rights and responsibilities has been lost.

Core Values and the Limits of Liberal Thought

Fallis brings an encyclopaedic knowledge to his investigation but his scenario of the future is at times unsatisfying because he never pushes liberal political boundaries. While he refers to Anglo-American multiversities, it becomes obvious that he takes the American multiversity as his model and gives little thought to the political dominance of the United States or the specific cultural idiosyncrasies that historian Richard Hofstadter described as "anti-intellectual" and "paranoid." Indeed, the multiversity envisioned by Fallis looks a lot like the present-day American multiversity, where many liberal and neoconservative public intellectuals anxiously claim "political correctness" is the enemy and

echo Matthew Arnold's exhortation to make "our " canonical culture the seat of authority and international cosmopolitan identity. Fallis borrows wholesale from the American political tradition and one wonders if there is a Canadian approach to these issues. Do we have our own democratic discourse to deal with these challenges?

The role of the multiversity in defining the core values of culture is at the centre of this debate. Despite a few nods in this direction, there is little sense in Fallis's arguments that today we can speak of a cosmopolitan culture in more inclusive ways, not as core but hybrid, in Homi Bhabha's resonant sense of the word: sedimented, overlapping, and interconnected with the interests and voices of people previously considered marginal. Fallis's nervousness about feminism, postmodernism, and multiculturalism seems unduly alarmist in this respect, and though he recommends a minor in liberal education, one wonders what texts he would include in the curriculum. A more fruitful strategy, but a much bigger challenge, might be to devise a curriculum in liberal education that allows students to understand the construction of the canon and what function these texts serve, and how the liberal canon and its emerging critiques are related and connected to each other — in other words, how to understand a whole rather than bits of a whole.

THE DANGERS OF CORPORATIZATION

Fallis's discussion of the commercialization of the university and university governance is, in contrast, particularly informative. For many academics concerned about the corporatization of the university, Fallis's analysis could be very useful in helping to understand historic shifts in government policies towards postsecondary education. Currently, my own small liberal arts campus, the University of New Brunswick in Saint John (UNBSJ), is fighting for its life in a struggle with a provincial government seeking to downgrade the campus into an applied institution. The province wants the university, located in a city which boasts the largest oil refinery in Canada, to be more responsive to business and so commissioned a Postsecondary Education report which has recommended restructuring university curriculum and governance to be more in tune with the needs of industry by creating what it calls "centres of excellence" in energy research.[4] The pressures that government and business place on the university are perceptively covered by Fallis.

---

4. UNBSJ has under 3,000 students which combined with the 9,000 students in the Fredericton campus form the bi-campus university of UNB. Each campus in isolation would be a small provincial university, but together the two reach the needed critical mass of students, faculties, and professional and

Fallis is also strong in his commitment to university governance. It is the only institutional mechanism whereby academics can influence the curriculum and defend academic freedom and curiosity-based research. Governance is essential to the autonomy of the academic institution and Fallis's alarm about the weakening of this principle is timely and important. Less persuasive, however, is his call to create a new social contract between university and society. The idea of a social contract is well meaning but vague; at one point even Fallis acknowledges its abstraction. Academic freedom, for example, cannot be effectively defended through explicit social contracts, laws, or regulation, though such are essential in establishing rights and obligations. Many principles of academic freedom are best defended through unwritten regulations and customs. Tocqueville, in his discussion of American democracy, criticized the social contract theory of democracy and settled for the primacy of *moeurs*: social practices imbedded in civic organizations and tradition. John Dewey said much the same thing when he suggested that democracy is a "way of life." An activist commitment to independent govern-

---

graduate programs to qualify as a national comprehensive university, albeit the smallest and the least well-financed one in the country. The PSE report entitled *Advantage New Brunswick: A Province Reaches to Fulfill its Destiny* set out to reinvent postsecondary education in New Brunswick. It sparked lively street protests and angry denunciations by students, faculty, and the community at large who saw the report as an attack on educational access and choice. For a copy of the document see: http://www.gnb.ca/cpse-ceps/EN/docs CEPNB_cahier_ang_LR. Much of the struggle to save UNBSJ has been documented at: http://livingininterestingtimes.wordpress.com/

To understand the brouhaha over New Brunswick postsecondary education we have to turn to provincial politics and the economy. The Liberal government of Shawn Graham has been promoting "transformational change" in education to support their new economic policy of self-sufficiency. Within this larger design, southern New Brunswick and the city of Saint John are promoted as an "energy hub" producing energy for export to the New England states. Meeting this economic objective would require new approaches to postsecondary education including transforming UNBSJ into a training facility and dismantling its traditional university governance and academic independence. "New Brunswick," wrote Rick Miner and Jacques L'Ecuyer, the authors of the PSE report, "needs institutions that are capable of responding quickly and effectively to the needs of students and employers. This means governance structures must be capable of making decisions in a timely manner. It means they must have access to information about the needs of business and industry, as well as other sectors of the community, and they must be able to act appropriately on that information" (p. 3).

After months of uncertainty and much community resistance the Liberal government finally conceded that UNBSJ will remain a university and part of UNB, but the pressure remains to change its curriculum and governance structure and become a research wing of business.

ance enables academics to preserve their interests and institutional integrity, and a healthy democracy requires that such practices be embedded in many of its institutions — labour unions, families, schools, and other civil organizations, not just in universities.

Ivory Tower Blues and *Multiversity, Ideas and Democracy* are very different books but they cover some similar ground. The latter is intellectually challenging; the former, regrettably, is not. Yet both focus attention on the future of the university. A liberal education in the post-Cold War era will be judged chiefly on how it manages issues traditionally at the centre of its democratic mission: accessibility to students, openness to oppositional ideas, the quality of an undergraduate education, relevance to society, and defence of academic freedom. These two books, one hyperbolic and the other emphatically centrist, sound the alarm on a number of these issues. While both betray an uncritical deference to the chimera of fundamental core values embedded in a liberal education, they each offer starting points for further debate and deliberation. Fallis's book in particular engages in a much needed conversation on the looming dangers to the university and how liberal education could be expanded to serve a truly global citizenship. In opening this conversation we must be careful not to let the multiversity assume its pre-Cold War role as an agent of soft cultural imperialism, and it seems that, in places, Fallis's "pragmatic adaptations" for the future of the multiversity may do just that.

REFERENCES

Chomsky, N. 1987. The responsibility of intellectuals. In James Peck, ed., *The Chomsky Reader*. Cambridge: Pantheon Press.

Howe, N. and W. Strauss. 2007 [2003]. *Millennials Go to College*. Paramount Market Research, Incorporated.

Livingston, D.W. 1999. *The Educational Jobs Gap: Underemployment or Economic Democracy*. Toronto: Garamond Press.

Mansfield, C.H. 2001. Grade inflation: It's time to face the facts. *Chronicle of Higher Education,* 6 Apr., B24.

UNIVERSITY OF NEW BRUNSWICK, SAINT JOHN   JOSEPH GALBO

Joe Galbo teaches Sociology and Information and Communication studies at UNBSJ. He has written on Daniel Bell and David Riesman for the *Journal of the History of Behavioral Science*. His policy-related research is on the New Brunswick Film Industry. His curiosity-based research is on Alexis de Tocqueville. He is an active member of the Save UNBSJ Committee. jgalbo@unbsj.ca