Education: Can we Help the Disadvantaged?

SOLUTIONS to the question posed in that title eluded the Vice-Chancellor’s 150th Anniversary Heritage Week seminar during Friday and Saturday April 6 and 7. Held in The University of Wollongong Union Hall, the seminar set out to identify just who the disadvantaged were — relatively easy — what their problems were — relatively easy — and just what could be done to help them: proposals for some specific areas were forthcoming but no overall guide as to directions education could take to provide help (at least in the short term) to disadvantaged youth.

Clearly the most disadvantaged groups in Australia are the Aborigines, the non-English-speaking migrants and the families of the unemployed.

Aboriginal problems said Bob Morgan (NSW Education Commission) could be solved only by the involvement of Aborigines. Talk of assimilation failed to recognise problems of access to culture, lifestyle and education of whites in the 20th century. On the question of Aboriginal tertiary education he felt that if institutions recognised demand and provided opportunities demand would increase: but access was the crying need.

On the problems facing migrants Mike Morrissey of the Wollongong University Centre for Multicultural Studies said: "Migration from non-English-speaking countries to a location in the Australian class system is characterised by disadvantage. People of this description experience a range of problems such as English-language learning, learning a language other than English and 'cultural' studies . . . English is the language of power or self-determination in Australia.'

His proposed strategies for aid were, first, preschooling aimed at ensuring that children do not make the first contact with school by experiencing it as a foreign country. The second is extensive and appropriate compensatory teaching of English. Conscious and structured development of the first language is essential to both the acquisition of the second language and to the acquisition of a wider range of skills . . . .

"My conclusion is that the various avenues by which first-language maintenance can be achieved should be fully recognised and institutionalised as an integral part of the education system."

On the question of families of unemployed or otherwise disadvantaged people Ken McCarthy, Principle of Warrawong High School, demonstrated convincingly what could be achieved by good leadership, imagination and sheer native cunning. In his school slow learners are not so labelled, and there is no expulsion. He was severely critical of an education system based on the 30-year-old Wyndham Report; of the way in which 77 per cent of failed pupils are disadvantaged — and receive cold comfort from a system in which over 40,000 are prevented from joining TAFE.

Please turn to back page

School of Creative Arts launches piano appeal

THE School of Creative Arts in The University is planning new and ambitious concerts for the people of Illawarra. International artists have pledged support for the musical and artistic life of the School. Now plans are advanced to purchase a full Steinway Concert Grand for the Music Centre.

This instrument will cost somewhere in the region of $40,000. Members of the public have been invited to become Patrons of the Piano Appeal by sending donations (no matter how large or small!) to make this dream come true as soon as possible. Already the sum of $8,200 has been raised.

The rewards to the people in the district will be profound, and Professor Cowie, head of the School, looks forward to the time when he can order the instrument.

Donations should be sent to: Piano Appeal, The University of Wollongong, P.O. Box 1144, Wollongong.
International conference at University receives world-wide attention

IN AUGUST 1984 The University of Wollongong will host an international conference on high-strength low-alloy (HSLA) steels to coincide with the bicentenary of the city of Wollongong. The conference (of which a preliminary announcement appeared in the Gazette for spring 1983) is being held under the sponsorship of both the Australasian Institute of Metals and the American Institute of Metallurgical Engineers and will be the first of its kind in Australia and, in fact, the first in the southern hemisphere.

Organisers are Dr T. Chandra and Dr D. P. Dunne of the Department of Metallurgy in the University.

The growing use of HSLA steels in shipbuilding, bridges, gas and oil pipelines, offshore platforms, automotive and transport industries reflects their significant advantages over conventional structural steels. The demand for this new generation of steel has increased five-fold in the past ten years.

The conference will be held between August 20 and 24 and has attracted worldwide attention. Delegates are expected from Japan, USA, Great Britain, China, Italy, France, Sweden, Canada, Korea, New Zealand and of course Australia.

Conference sessions will include a series of keynote lectures by internationally known experts and will cover fundamental and production aspects of HSLA steels and their application in automobiles, pipelines and offshore platforms.

There will be a strong emphasis on technological practices of steel producers and users in Asia and south-east Asia.

Arrangements are being made for visits to local industries and for an exhibition of engineering products of the region and of Australia in general.

FOCUS ON NEEDS OF THE FUTURE
New Faculty of Education

IN his occasional column in the autumn issue of The University of Wollongong Gazette the Vice-Chancellor made a passing reference to the amalgamation of the pre-existing University Department of Education and the Institute School of Education. To enlarge on the significance of the linking of the two bodies we formed a new Faculty of Education we sought the view of Professor Ron King, chairman of the Faculty.

Professor King comments: ‘Perhaps the most important point to be made is that the new Faculty of Education should be of considerable benefit to students who want either to be teachers or who want to take up some special study in Education. The Faculty will arrange a substantial staff development program and a network of assistance for the academic and research work of the staff to help in this regard. The fact that the academic staff members of the two linked units sought, rather than were forced by government, to create a Faculty of Education is in itself the most encouraging sign of a successful venture.

‘The establishment of the Faculty should be seen in two contexts: that of recent University-wide developments and that of the longer-term history of education as a field of academic, scholarly and research work and of teacher preparation. The net effect of the changes is a Faculty in a broadly based university with a coverage as wide as was evident in Australian universities before the Martin, Murray and Wark reports took effect from the early 1960s.

‘The University of Wollongong now has the great advantage of a Faculty of Education of relatively large size. An academic staff of over 60 in the Faculty raises the possibility of consolidating some of the essential areas already in being, and of developing new areas to help us focus on the needs of education well into the future.

‘In the areas requiring consolidation, we should be able to experiment with different kinds of teacher education and teacher-preparation programs. We now have in Wollongong an opportunity to consolidate programs based on alternative forms of teacher education with a view to upgrading the education and skills of the nation’s teaching force.

‘Among the new areas to be developed the Faculty has already begun work on a policy group to analyse and comment constructively on policy issues in the federal and state spheres. This initiative has already had an indication of support and involvement from the Director General of Education in NSW and the Deputy Director General and from the Vice-Chancellor of this University.

Vice-Chancellor to head UNESCO
Australian Commission

THE Vice-Chancellor of Wollongong University, Dr Ken McKinnon, has been appointed chairman of the Australian National Commission of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO). The commission consists of 58 of Australia’s leading scientists, educators, artists, and cultural, media and communication groups. It meets regularly to plan Australia’s involvement in UNESCO, and to help implement its programs in Australia and in the region.

Survey of Macarthur HSC Candidates

SENIOR high school students in the Macarthur region have expressed a keen interest in studying at The University of Wollongong. Survey results released by the University’s former Schools Liaison Officer, Mr Tom Moore, show that Wollongong ranks second only to Sydney University as the preferred institution for university study.

Wollongong was the first preference for potential CAE students. The study was conducted in late 1983. It involved all HSC candidates at schools in the Macarthur region. In all almost 500 year-12 students responded to the Survey.

Mr Moore commented that the study indicated a heightened awareness among school students of the advantages of studying at The University of Wollongong: the results reflect the University’s growing prestige and its perceived accessibility to residents of the Macarthur region.

The survey brought together information on a wide range of topics, from university preferences to the influence of parents on career choices. It is the first study of its kind conducted in the region.

The research project will involve a follow-up survey this year of the students who were questioned to establish just what they have done on leaving school.
Once again, on the University campus during the first week of May, student and family dreams were turned to reality. Degree conferring ceremonies were the order of the day.

Of all the degrees conferred, however, the most notable was that of Doctor of Letters, Honoris Causa, to Sir Richard Kirby. The degree was awarded in recognition of Sir Richard's long and distinguished service — 1956 to 1973 — as President of the Commonwealth Conciliation and Arbitration Commission and Chief Judge of the Commonwealth Court of Conciliation and Arbitration. He retired in 1973 because of ill health. He has, of course, been a much-valued member of the University Council since 1978; he retired this year. The conferring proceedings began on Wednesday May 2 — for graduates in Engineering, Mathematical Sciences and Metallurgy — with the occasional address delivered by Professor R. I. Tanner, Professor and Pro-Dean of the Department of Mechanical Engineering at the University of Sydney.

At the second ceremony on the same day, for graduates in Commerce and Science, the Address was given by Dr Ken McCracken, Chief of the Division of Mineral Physics in the CSIRO and an authority on world satellite communication systems. On Thursday May 3 further ceremonies were held: one for graduates in the Faculty of Arts in the morning and another later, for graduates in Arts and Education. Occasional addresses were by Dr Winifred Mitchell, member of the University Council, and Ms Pat O'Shane, Secretary to the Department of Aboriginal Affairs, respectively.

Finally, on the Friday, degrees were conferred on Education graduates (all Institute courses by internal study) in the morning, and on Education graduates by external study, and Associate Diplomas in Creative Arts, in the afternoon. Occasional addresses were by Professor Peter Rousch, Director of the Institute of Advanced Education, and by Thomas Keneally, arguably Australia's foremost novelist today, and likely to be so tomorrow as well.

The Chancellor of the University, Justice R. Hope, and Sir Richard Kirby, after the presentation of a Doctor of Letters, honoris causa, to Sir Richard, in honour of his service to the University Council.
Graham Beacham, who received a Diploma in Teaching, will be taking up a teaching post in Tanzania next month. He is pictured here with his sister, Lynette, his father, Des, and his mother, Helen. (Photo courtesy of the Illawarra Mercury).

One of Wollongong's outstanding graduates, Peter Strazdins, who received both a Bachelor of Maths and a Bachelor of Science this year, with an excellent record in both courses.

Pat O'Shane, Secretary of the N.S.W. Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs, addressing Arts and Education graduates. Ms O'Shane spoke on Equal Employment issues.

Dr Ken McCracken, of the C.S.I.R.O., delivered the occasional address to Commerce and Science graduates. Dr McCracken is pictured chatting with Professor Ron King, Dr Ken McKinnon, the Vice-Chancellor; and Dr Peter Burton.

Dr Madeline Cincotta was awarded the University's first Ph.D. in Philosophy. She is pictured here with her husband, Dr Vincent Cincotta, who is a senior lecturer with the Department of European Languages.

Wendy Raikes, B.A. and a member of the University Staff, with her husband, Gary, and daughter, Aimee.
Hendrika Tibbits, member of the University Staff, graduated with a Bachelor of Commerce degree.

Alan Bartlow received a Ph.D. in Psychology, with his thesis entitled, 'The Derivation of a Psychological Theory: Gestalt Therapy.'

Special guest at the Graduation Ceremony for Education and Creative Arts was Mr Thomas Keneally, novelist, whose speech had a particularly 'Australian' flavour.

Graduate Chemists pose with teaching staff from the Department of Chemistry — Associate Professor Peter Bolton, Professor Leon Kane-Maguire and Dr Peter Burton.

Footballer John Sparkes and Belinda Sheridan both received a Bachelor of Education (Physical and Health).

Anglican bishop, Bishop Goodhew, with his daughter Wendy, who received a Bachelor of Education, Wendy's husband, Graham Bonnister, and Mrs Goodhew.

Dr Margaret Hamilton, who received a Ph.D. in Mathematics, follows a family tradition. Her sister, Carol Kiernan and husband, Dr Timothy Hamilton are both graduates of the University of Wollongong.
Australian humour mirrors Australian life

CHAIRMAN of the Department of English Literature at The University of Wollongong, Dorothy Jones is researching Australian humour. She has delivered two papers on the topic — one at the National Annual Conference of English Teachers (held in Spain in December 1982) and the other at a conference on comedy at Monash University, Melbourne, in 1983. The material that follows is drawn from these papers.

Australian humour frequently strikes a sombre note, perhaps because it has its roots in the way Australians of European origin have seen themselves in relation to a physical environment they found alien and indifferent, and also from their experience of a harshly oppressive social system.

In convict slang to wear a 'red shirt' was to have a back lacerated with flogging; bread which contained more bran than flour was known as a 'scrubbing brush', and the rocky outcrop in Sydney Harbour where recalcitrant convicts were kept in solitary confinement on a diet of bread and water was christened Pinchgut Island.

Vane Lindsay in his survey of Australian comic art The Inked-in-Image records a joke drawing which appeared in the magazine Smith's Weekly in 1933, with the country still in the grip of the Depression, which expresses what for him is the central theme of Australian humour — the fundamental characteristic born of adversity — "You can't win". This idea is certainly contained in the drawing, but it is offset by the anarchic absurdity of indecent exposure in public with its accompanying emotions of embarrassment and derision.

An interplay between fatalism and grim irony on the one hand, and anarchic absurdity, often expressing various forms of protest, on the other is a principal characteristic of Australian humour.

"For gorsake stop laughing: this is serious!" (Australia's most famous cartoon. Drawn by Stan Cross, it appeared in Smith's Weekly in 1933)

Acknowledging and emphasising the harshness of circumstance is one form of protest which provides comic release, as a wealth of recorded idiom indicates:

The harvest was so poor the sparrows had to kneel down to get at the wheat.
Dry as a kookaburra's khyber in the Simpson Desert.

He was as miserable as an orphan bandicoot on a burnt ridge.

The use of fantasy and grotesque exaggeration to convey the hardships of life in the bush endows with heroic stature those who endure them, and has given rise to a tradition of tall stories about characters who perform miraculous feats of skill and mastery like Cabbage-tree Ned in Dal Stivens' story The Crack Shot who 'shot so straight he could knock the eye off a snail at a hundred yards' and 'shot so far he used salt bullets so the game would keep until he got up to it'. Another favourite motif is the sparring combat of epic proportions as when, in Banjo Patterson's poem, the Geelong Polo Club meet the Cuff and Collar team from the city.

And the game was so terrific that ere half the time was gone
A spectator's leg was broken — just from merely looking on.

A view of the world which represents human beings as victims of an alien environment and an uncaring destiny is egalitarian in its implications, and Australians frequently pride themselves on their general irreverence towards authority. There is a story of Australian soldiers in World War One being paraded before an English officer who was trying to discover which of them had called the regimental cook a bastard, with one of them explaining, 'You keep on asking us who called that cook a bastard; what we want to know is who called that bastard a cook?'

But Australian attitudes to authority and matters of propriety are more ambivalent than many people like to believe. Throughout the nineteenth century bullock drivers were notorious and greatly admired for the vigorous and varied flow of language with which they urged on their beasts, but one bullocky, overheard by a policeman while swearing at his team, was actually tried on the charge of using obscene language to his bullocks and sentenced to four days gaol.

And what are we to make of a parliamentarian who asserts in the House of Representatives: 'I never use the word "bloody" because it is unparliamentary. It is a word that I never bloody well use'.

Although Australians appreciate irreverence, its implications make them nervous. The attraction of figures like Ned Kelly or an event like the Eureka Stockade, however venerated as representing a heroic defiance of authority, lies partly in the fact that they failed. The historian, Ian Turner, comments on how Australians see themselves as losers and identify with failure as a result perhaps of the harsh conditions originally imposed by climate and geography. But it may also be that, while Australians admire the defiant gesture and enjoy the idea of challenging those with power and status, they are not prepared to accept the degree of social change that characterises a genuinely successful challenge.

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For all its deflationary, irreverent quality, Australian humour is generally an acknowledgement of the status quo.

Second great concert

SECOND of the programmes by the Wollongong Symphony Orchestra for 1984 will take place on Saturday May 26 at 8 pm in Wollongong Town Hall. Entitled Lorraine Smith Plays, the programme features Wollongong violinist Lorraine Smith (now a member of the esteemed Australian Chamber Orchestra) who will perform the Wieniawski Second Violin Concerto, works by Elgar, and the Beethoven Seventh Symphony.

Guest conductor will be Edward Cowie, Professor of the University of Wollongong and Head of the University's School of Creative and Performing Arts.
Conservatorium to be affiliated with University

In his article in the previous issue of the Gazette the Vice-Chancellor, Dr Ken McKinnon, touched on the new association of the University and the Wollongong Conservatorium of Music. The Vice-Chancellor was commenting on an earlier statement by the State Premier, Mr Wran, in which he announced that, instead of being administered from Sydney, the Conservatorium would in future be affiliated with the University of Wollongong. The Conservatorium will occupy the present site at Glennifer Brae and will continue to receive a substantial grant from the state government.

'The new arrangements,' the Premier said, 'will enable the Conservatorium to perform an enhanced role in the delivery of music education in the city of Wollongong.'

A board of management would consist of the Conservatorium head, two Wollongong University council members, a City Council representative, two community representatives, a representative for the Education Minister and the NSW Conservatorium of Music director.

The Premier made the point also in his statement that such professional guidance would guarantee strong community involvement and would provide a solid base for the innovative program of creative arts which the University is developing.

Negotiations to establish formal relations between the tertiary sector and the Conservatorium were of course initiated in 1981 by the Wollongong Institute of Education (before its amalgamation with the University) when the director, Dr Peter Rousch, had discussions with Mr Jim Powell, principal of the Wollongong Branch of the state Conservatorium of Music, and the NSW Minister of Education.

Writing to the Gazette on the implications of the report, Mr Jim Powell, made these points:

'I am encouraged by the potential for development afforded the Conservatorium and I am convinced that it will prove to be in the best interests of the Illawarra region. From the traditional point of view, the Conservatorium has a unique character. In servicing the community of Illawarra, it has found itself reaching down from tertiary-level, fine-performance music to encompass the pre-literacy-age music student and, for what it is worth, the affiliation itself is to a degree unique in that pre-literacy-preparatory students are not normally catered for on a tertiary campus.

'I believe this reflects changing educational philosophies, particularly in music, where credibility is only beginning to gain momentum in this country in respect of the importance associated with pre-music literacy training for very young children.

'It is worth noting that current research suggests there is much yet to be appreciated in even younger children — i.e., children born with what has been later assessed as an appearing genetic disposition, towards music... It does, however, appear to me entirely creditable that, in the present educational climate, and particularly within the Illawarra Region, two affiliated institutions should attend the total (music) education of the future tertiary (music) graduate.

'With that in mind, there are certain considerations which should be confronted now, since in one instance, there is an insidious long-term "spin-off" having the potential to promote a lesser-quality music student, i.e., one having, say, inferior aptitude and perhaps lacking entirely an innate musicianship — factors vital to the fine-performance graduates. And here I refer to the problem of fees. Unfortunately, the present Conservatorium single-study-fee structure, for even young children, is higher than university fees and determines the fact that music is now for the privileged. Privileged does not necessarily mean talented. The tragedy is that it is almost impossible to estimate, in Illawarra, how much musical talent may remain dormant, never to be discovered or realised in a developed form.

'It is a sobering experience to delve into how many, and the manner in which, third-world countries have dealt with this problem. Egalitarianism and elitism do not appear to have been problems! Abolish fees...

'I think the urgent implication is that in the interest of discovering, nurturing and developing musical talent in Illawarra, there have to be further changes in the policies and philosophies of the traditional-style Conservatorium, and hope, in time, that the Wollongong Conservatorium in its affiliation with the University will (in the interest of talent) promote a further unique attribute with the abolition of fees.

'Of course, one immediately anticipates strong reaction such as "opening of the flood gates", or "threatening the livelihood of the local music teacher". Not so. The whole concept is based on the need for a Talent Related Policy for Illawarra.'
Spinifex software launched by University computer experts

A GROUP of academics and computer experts at The University of Wollongong have formed a limited company, Spinifex Software, to develop and market top quality educational software.

The company originated from a close association which had emerged among a group of school teachers in the Illawarra region, and education and computer experts centred on the University. Concerned at the generally poor quality of educational software currently available for use in Australian schools, this group set out to develop several pilot software packages of its own. It has as its major objective the development and commercial exploitation of educationally sound computer software packages which incorporate state-of-art software and graphics design techniques.

The initial packages are intended as both a demonstration and a necessary first step in the implementation of a distinctive design philosophy which the group had conceived.

Classroom testing and independent evaluation of the pilot packages by professional teacher groups quickly confirmed the educational need for the development of this kind of software.

Spinifex Software was formed after the commercial viability of continuing development was indicated by the strong expressions of interest from several firms with established international networks for the marketing and distribution of educational products. These firms shared with Spinifex the perception of a rapidly growing world-wide market for high-quality educational software, with growth of the industry in Australia, in particular, strongly supported by both the education and technology policies of government.

Preliminary discussions with computer hardware manufacturers, in contemplation of securing the various benefits attaching to recognition as accredited software developers, proved equally encouraging.

It is intended that Spinifex Software should maintain its close links with both the University and the teaching profession. Involvement with the teaching profession is seen as necessary to ensure that Spinifex concentrates on software which teachers perceive as being relevant to the practical requirements of the classroom.

Initially the links with the University and the teaching profession arose mainly at the level of personnel, with the principals and consultants of Spinifex Software being either academic staff members of the University or professional school teachers.

More recently, these links have been strengthened by the University's decision to agree to provide Spinifex with the use of valuable physical facilities and services, including serviced office space and access to the University's extensive computer services.

Given its conviction that its design philosophy is both unique and sound; that it has considerable access to educational and computer expertise; that it is well positioned to benefit from public programs of support; and that it is determined to apply the same thorough professionalism in running its business as it does in developing sound and marketable products, Spinifex is confident that it will emerge as a strong and commercially successful competitor in the rapidly expanding educational sector of the computer software market.

In addition to developing its own mainstream line of educational software products, Spinifex also provides an educational software development service on a contract basis to customer specifications, as well as a range of consultancy advice services in the broad areas of educational software evaluation, design, development and marketing.

Specific inquiries relating to contract and consultancy advice services should be addressed to the Technical Director, at the University.

Sir Michael Tippett visits University

THE world-famous composer, musicologist, historian and philosopher Sir Michael Tippett visited the School of Creative Arts in the University on March 23. The great Englishman has displayed a good deal of interest in the formation of the school, and with good reason for the Head of the School is a former student and colleague — Professor Edward Cowie — who came to Wollongong last year.

During Sir Michael's visit a public lecture was given by his associate, Mr Merton Bowen, and there was included in the proceedings a performance of Sir Michael's, Little Music for Strings.

Rather belying his world reputation Sir Michael, who was born in 1905, had a conventional musical education in London and was, indeed, something of a late starter, at least as a composer. The first works he now acknowledges date from his thirties.

A man renowned for his love of peace and compassion, Sir Michael was a conscientious objector during the second world war, and for his objection to killing spent two months in the prison at Wormwood Scrubs. Further evidence of his attitude to life is reflected in his most recent opera The Ice Break — which deals with racial tension and the generation gap.

Taking his theme from the context of Heritage Week, he made the points that the children of the region are our best heritage and that we should endeavour to prevent disadvantage among them. Governments could be made to help and politicians were more responsive to pressures than generally acknowledged.

It would be to the detriment of everyone who could not have a good education if we (i.e., educators), perhaps in the belief that the road ahead was too hard, stumbled in our thinking. He stressed the fact that the seeds of ideas aired at seminars just such as this were planted and germinated in ways not foreseen or apparent when they were first expressed. He cited as an example the case of Papua New Guinea's achieving Independence — only a few years after any thought of Independence had seemed little more than a distant dream.

Vice- Chancellor's Seminar

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Also at the seminar: Elizabeth Johnstone, Equal Employment Opportunities Co-ordinator at the University, and Dr Winifred Mitchell, a member of the University Council