

Lang. RW. Letter, 040707

July 4, 2007

Editor, University of Waterloo Magazine:

Since our conversation of yesterday, I took the opportunity to review *Waterloo* once again. Having done this, I am more convinced than before that my initial response was the correct one.

I draw your attention to a single sentence by Ken Coates, Dean of the Faculty of Arts, which supports my view:

“Over the next fifty years, I believe that the social sciences, humanities and fine arts will regain some of their traditional prominence in the university.” p. 47

You say you don't understand my comments on patents. Let me suggest you replace them with the following observations following the sentence ending with “they expect something in return.” That something is the basic research being conducted by professors in the engineering and scientific departments. If they develop a patentable product, the professor owns the patent rights, which he can sell to the corporation. The university receives nothing, yet this same professor uses the facilities and equipment provided by the university as well as his or her salary, which comes from public funds. In brief, the corporations are being subsidized by the public purse. If an employee of a corporation develops a patentable product, it belongs to the corporation. Why does the patent not belong to Waterloo where the professor has the status of an employee?

Does this clarify matters?

A couple of final observations:

The university claims to promote critical thought and analyses. Apparently this would appear to be the case unless it is criticism directed at the university itself.

The university also claims it wants feedback from its alumnae — again only if it is of the praiseworthy variety.

As for the rather arbitrary 300-word limit on letters, I would suggest in future that this restriction should be duly noted in future publications — a restriction that, I might add, should also apply to the editor's page.

Dr. R.W. Lang

P.S. I expect my letter to be published as submitted with the “patent section” replaced by my clarification.