

Lang, RW Letter

June 14, 2007

Editor, University of Waterloo Magazine:

I read with a great deal of frustration, which slowly boiled to a slow anger, when reading the 50th anniversary edition of the *Waterloo* magazine.

Why is the content so one-sided and slanted toward the sciences, chemistry, biotechnology, engineering, computer science, quantum physics, *ad infinitum* and *ad absurdum*.

As a graduate of political science (BA 68, MA 69, PhD from the LSE 72), I find it reprehensible and irresponsible that the humanities and the social studies departments are completely ignored. Are political science, economics, sociology, philosophy, history and geography still taught? Or have these departments been abolished?

The graduates of these departments make a tremendous contribution to bettering the human condition. Many of them have laboured long in fighting to eradicate poverty, eliminate all forms of oppression, improve working conditions for those who labour to support their families, and to banish all forms of discrimination in the fight for human rights. Is their contribution not worth mentioning? Why are all the photos of those who studied the natural sciences featured? I can only conclude the rest of the student faculty don't count.

What has happened to the Canadian Studies program? As the Honorary Chair of the Stanley Knowles Visiting Professorship, which was part of the Canadian Studies program, we raised \$750,000. Does it still exist? If so, why was it not mentioned?

Freedom of expression and balance were the trademark of Waterloo when I attended. One would have thought that at least the 50th anniversary issue would reflect these basic tenets.

It does not take a careful reading of the magazine to conclude that the reason Waterloo and its research programs have become so slanted toward the science and engineering faculties is directly in proportion to the influence wielded by the corporations over Waterloo's policies.

There is a reason for this of course: the corporations through their donations benefit greatly from having professors and students as an adjunct to their own employees and

research. Their reasons for donating funds is not entirely altruistic; they expect something in return. This raises a number of interesting questions: for example, on new inventions by the university, who gets the patent? Where drugs are concerned, the patent is on the process, not the product. Does the university retain patent rights, and if not, what does this say to the question of the free dissemination of knowledge in a university setting? A rather crucial question, it would appear.

The Waterloo I loved and remember is in no way reflected in the 50th edition. Of course at that time, instead of having a who's who of business sitting on the Board of Governors, the entire community was reflected on the Board — a requirement which I believe was set out in the Charter establishing the university, but which is now conveniently ignored.

In my view, Waterloo has sold its heart and soul to the corporations, which is a tragedy of monumental proportions.

This raises a final question. Why does the university continue to send out the *University of Waterloo Magazine* to graduates of the humanities and social studies departments since it contains nothing for them?

Waterloo belongs to me as much or more than to some special interest group. Indeed, it belongs to the community as a whole, and the sooner it returns to its original values of inclusiveness, the better off we shall all be.

Sincerely,

Dr. Ronald W. Lang

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P.S. To the Editor: I expect this letter to be published in the next edition — unless of course the university censors letters critical of its administration. Please acknowledge.