

DEAN'S DESK

Donna R. Runnalls

The Birks Lecture Series at the end of September was once again planned as the first part of a larger program, which had as the second part a Symposium on *Truth and Tolerance*. Dr. John Hick, the 1989 Birks Lecturer, chose as his theme *Jesus Christ in a Religiously Plural World*, with the three lectures covering the topics: 1. From Jesus to Christ; 2. The Orthodox Understanding and its Problems; and 3. Christianity and the Other World Religions. The audience was very responsive, making the question periods lively and interesting.

The Symposium also elicited enthusiastic response as more than 100 people attended various sessions. It was planned to commemorate the Act of Toleration of 1689 and was jointly sponsored by the Faculty, The Canadian Unitarian Council, the McGill Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. Scholars from Canada, the United States and Britain presented papers and deliberated on two issues: first, the historical significance for the western world of the growth of religious tolerance during the last three hundred years; and second, the importance of issues of truth and tolerance in the interfaith encounter in the contemporary world.

In the second semester the discussion of religious pluralism has continued. We were pleased to have a visit from Dr. Harvey Cox who gave a well-received lecture entitled "Interfaith Dialogue: The Human Dimension."

The popularity of undergraduate courses in the Faculty of Religious Studies continues. At the end of the first semester a survey designed by Professor Janet Donald, Director of the McGill Centre for University Teaching and Learning, was circulated to students enrolled in our courses. The results show that students are taking courses in Religious Studies for a variety of reasons: the most frequently cited are the students' specific interests, and the need or desire for an elective which gives a broader education. Other reasons given are the desire for personal or religious development, or the need for knowledge related to a major or honours program. This survey is a useful resource for future planning. In the past six years the full-time student equivalent has grown by 91%. With only a 9% increase in teaching staff, the Faculty now has the heaviest staff/student ratio in the University.

The University Administration has recognized our teaching overload so that we have received permission to make a new appointment in the field of Ethics. The search committee is presently considering the applications.

Dr. Arvind Sharma has been promoted to the rank of full professor.

Dr. Douglas J. Hall is on sabbatical and is located in West Germany. While there he is also working on the preparation of the report on "Justice, Peace, and the Integrity of Creation" for the 1991 Canberra meeting of the World Council of Churches.

Professor Katherine Young continues to pursue her research on "New Reproductive Technologies and the Family". Her co-researcher is Dr. Paul Nathanson, who has now successfully defended his doctoral dissertation at McGill. Ms. Leslie Orr is teaching Professor Young's courses.

Students and staff of the Faculty were greatly saddened by the death in January of the Rev. Stephen Lisson, a Ph.D. student working with Douglas Hall in theology. Stephen had been at McGill since September 1988 and had greatly endeared himself to this community. His death in a traffic accident was a great shock to us all.