

Solutions Require Concentrated, Not Part-time Efforts

Amidst the helter skelter of term paper, exams, seminars etc I wonder how many of us here at U.P.E.I. has taken time to seriously analyze where this university is going in terms of the next 5 years and the role we as students and teachers play in the direction which this university will take.

It is already clear that we are facing a financial crisis for next year. Within the next few weeks facts and figures will be released indicating the seriousness of this problem visa vis residence fees, tuition fees and the overall budget. I strongly believe that the biggest problem this university is facing is that we offer courses in navigation when, in fact, the ship is sinking. We spend all kinds of time preparing for future expectations without concerning ourselves with even the most immediate problems.

Because we have engaged in such superficial analysis of the problems, we have been practically unable to apply the factual knowledge that we have gained. For example, how many of us understand how power and wealth are used in our society? How many of us real-

ize how power is related to the many economic and political decisions that are made for us not only in society but in this university. How many of us realize that we, as students of society, are so ignorant and powerless in regards to how the decisions are being made because of our inability to question the rules by which our society and the university are set up? Many of us spend all kinds of time interpreting and explaining society. Anyone can analyse problems. How many of us though can critically question why the problem is there in the first place?!

If this university is to survive the economic crunch that it is facing, and if we as students are really concerned with the future of education, immediate action must be taken. The method and techniques to use, however, pose a very great problem. At present, the only approach to any problem here at the university is to work within a committee. This, to my mind, is precisely the problem which we must confront if we are to save the university from economic collapse. If you want to do something well then you have to put all your energy into it. With the complexity of the problems

which committees are confronted with, it is hard to maintain enthusiasm and interest if people on the committees are constantly being side-tracked. For example: there is a problem or something which needs to be investigated. It is either referred to an existing committee or a new committee is formed. People are enthusiastic and interested at the start but eventually interest is lost and enthusiasm. Why has this happened? Schoolwork, breaks, vacations, research, etc. have interfered with and extended the effectiveness of that committee. We can no longer continue to play bureaucratic games if we are to put our house in order. If committees are to be effective, you can't be a part-time committee member and a part-time student. It should not take all year to investigate the Aims and Objectives, for example. But rather a week or ten days of solid comprehensive evaluation.

It is apparent that the university won't get back on the right track until the people involved recognize the long-range implications of the problems which presently seem so obscure to the majority. The writing is on the wall. We can

continue to let the Board of Governors and a few administrators manipulate our university budgets and make decisions that are in accordance with their interests not ours. We can act busy all year long by going to unending committee meetings.

Or we can come to the conclusion that the way we are presently doing things is severely jeopardizing and interfering with our learning process. We are all here to learn - teachers and students alike. But our learning process is being interfered with by the manipulation of money and the allocation of resources. We must put an end to it or it will put an end to us. We must sit down as a university community consisting of faculty, administration, students, and support staff and collectively take a course of action even if it means to cancel all classes.

The way in which this university is being administered at present is not working. The reason why it is not working is because we do not have a soul for this learning environment. A soul that will give us aim and direction, purpose and meaning in search of more physical, intellectual, and self fulfillment. Is the university worth preserving? Is college education justifiable when we look at what a graduate contributes to society? What do we owe the people of Prince Edward Island who, though taxes finance over half the cost of this university? Can the university justify its role in the community when faculty and administration make 6 to 7 times more money than the average civil servant on the Island? Just what kind of a university do we want and what is our responsibility to ourselves to make this Island and world a better place to live. The time has come when we must get serious and constructive and, in co-operation with all sectors of the university and community, answer these crucial problems.

The survival of our university depends upon our ability to make rational and humane decisions. How well can we apply most of the knowledge that we have accumulated over the years will determine the outcome. This is the real test: to practically apply accumulated knowledge - the stakes are not a seventy or an eighty minute class or a two hour class once every two weeks or so, but a 3 week, 4 week or even longer seminar where there are no consumers but only producers.

Art Laffin



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Rev. Eugene O'Reilly, C.S.S.R. 721 Coxwell Avenue Telephone (416) 466-9265 Toronto M4C 3C3