

LETTERS CONT'D

Dear Sir:

I read with interest K.J. McNeill's article on enrollment in the September 25 Cadre, but I disagree with Mr. McNeill's interpretation of the diminishing student body and its implications.

In my judgement a heavy decline in full time enrollment from the peak reached in 1971 was inevitable, and it came as no shock to me.

There are several reasons for it. First and foremost is the depressing white collar employment situation in Canada. Its impact on university students hit the Maritimes with full force two or three years after it had surfaced in the rest of Canada and the U.S.A. With Ph.D's having to take temporary jobs as taxi drivers and short order

cooks, and owners of Master's and Bachelor's degrees being turned away by employers as "overeducated", the economic value of a university degree has depreciated.

A second reason for our falling enrollment is the fading novelty of U.P.E.I. Any new college or university is likely during its early years to have a growing student body, one larger than an established institution would normally have. High hopes and ambitious plans create a euphoria certain to be deflated as the harsh realities of university politics clash and grind. Bright young men are attracted to the faculty of a new school. Their ideals blunted and their schemes suppressed, they soon drift away, leaving behind disenchanted colleagues and students who pass the word that the experiment is a failure. This has happened here, as those associated with UPEI since 1969 will testify.

Many people on the Island have never forgiven the provincial government for destroying the old religious colleges, and they have made UPEI the scapegoat. Many families refuse to send their sons and daughters to the consolidated university if they can afford to send them to a mainland institution. During its first three years, most students who had started university at P.W.C. or S.D.U. chose to continue at U.P.E.I., but in numerous instances their brothers and sisters are not coming here. It is my impression that the middle class Protestant families who once patronized Prince of Wales College were the most offended by the amalgamation and remain irreconcilably bitter. But many Catholic families also dispatch their offspring to St.F.X. and other R.C. schools across the Strait.

It was noted by Mr. McNeill that part time enrollment continues to rise. In a period of increasing and threatening unemployment on the Island--a shaky agricultural economy, many young people prefer to take a paying job and continue their studies on the side. This is particularly true of the upwardly-mobile who ordinarily seek a university degree. They are determined to maintain or raise their enrollment levels. It is not fashionable to live frugally as a student while postponing expectations.

Not least in importance is the factor in declining enrollment. UPEI is its poor morale, the causes requiring much sophisticated, U.P.E.I. has failed to achieve the image of dynamism and challenge that Mr. Baker and others associated with the new university hoped

to be developed. Very early in the history of the university a pall of depression, and a reliance upon the student body for vitality. It has never lifted, and is not known as a swinging university.

Given these conditions, it is a belief that enrollment will continue to drop until it levels off at about 1200 full time students. Part of this slack will be made up by part time enrollees. Enrollment numbers I predict will show a slight increase, though more slowly than the general decline.

Does this mean, as Mr. McNeill claims, that the university will be extinct in five years? Certainly not, for at least two reasons. One, it would be a mission of failure and independence by the Campbell government to close down the university created, which in any case is one of the chief symbols of Island autonomy. Second, much public money has been poured into the campus and planned as a capital investment

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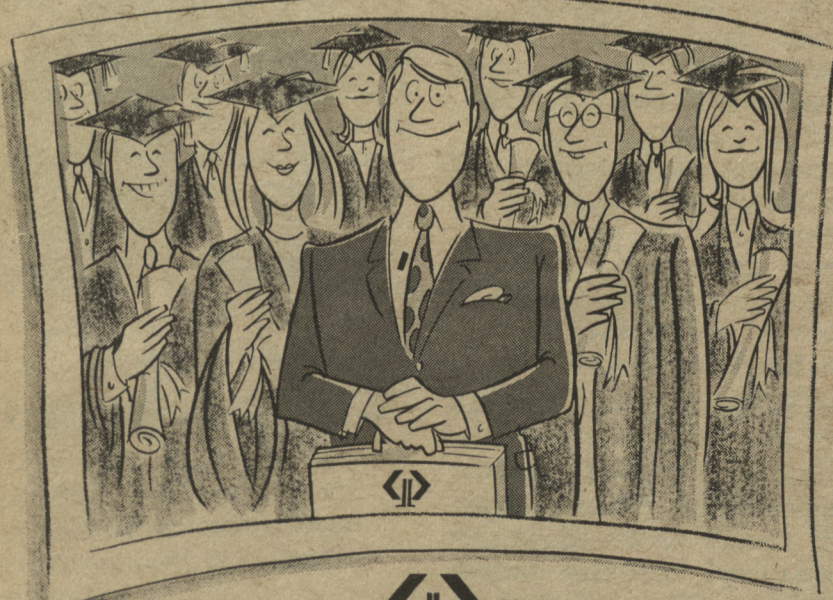
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PRESS CONFERENCE

Last year three students from UPEI's Cadre attended the Atlantic Regional Can. University Press conference at Memorial University in Newfoundland. At the conference UPEI was chosen to host this year's delegates.

October 26, 27 & 28 are the dates set for representatives of all the Atlantic University papers to get together and discuss different aspects of writing, staff problems and news in general.

The students will be staying in our new apartments and

spending the majority of their time on campus.

Mr. Gram Allen, C.I.B.C. representative for the Atlantic Region now living in St. John's will be the guest speaker on Saturday October 27.

Anyone interested in the paper organization and like to attend any of the seminars feel free to contact The location of the press conference will be published later.

Kathy
Vice-President

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