

# EMPLOYMENT FOR THE 80'S

by Maureen Hartman

The federal government invaded the Barn on Monday, September 22, for a conference entitled "Employment Opportunities for the 80's". The Hon. Warren Allmand, M.P., chaired the Task Force hearing and was assisted by David Orlikow, M.P. Various members of the community presented their views on the employment situation on PEI and any possible practical solutions.

Speaking from UPEI were Prof. Gary Webster, chairman of the Political Science department, Dr. Peter Meincke, president of the University, and Philip Brown, president of the Student Union.

Prof. Webster began by stating that it is obviously difficult to guess at employment in PEI for the eighties. However, past years have shown certain trends. Firstly, in order to attract high quantity and quality of skilled labour, a more sufficient reward for good labour must be insured than has been in former years. PEI has not achieved a healthy market for industrial labour. Islanders have been driven to change from traditional jobs in order to sustain themselves.

Secondly, Prof. Webster pointed out that from 1960-1976, the number of family farms here dropped to almost half what they had been. More than 50% of those on family farms make their major income away from the family farm. Now only some several hundred family farms provide full employment.

Lately only 10% of the farms are providing the major supply of the Island's potatoes. This is a deliberate act of the federal and provincial governments to curtail the production of the family farm.

People who formerly made a living in fisheries are being driven from it. Recently, according to Webster, a local co-op closed because there was no market, whereas a branch of a major international corporation is the major redistributor of Island fish.

The problem does not seem to lie in the lack of skilled employees or the lack of willingness to work, but rather the type of work available on PEI is not adequate in the dignity provided in many jobs, or the monetary rewards. Many people accept unsanitary working conditions because there is no other work and because a fear of unionization has been so well bred into them.

The Island needs secondary

manufacturing. With projects similar to the West Royalty Industrial Park, however, Webster claimed that they have "succeeded in creating mini Hong Kongs" as a result of low wages and a very large turnover of the labour force. Workers are not given a chance to develop skills necessary to the job, and until last week, they had no unionization. The West Royalty Industrial Park was developed by the provincial government. It includes 25-30 firms, many of which are from outside the province. Within the past 18 months, they have had a turnover of 1700 persons.

Another case brought to the attention of the Task Force by Prof. Webster (and one which took even Mr. Allmand by surprise) was McDonalds. They seem to specialize in 14 and 15 year old workers who earn \$2.55-\$2.60 per hour. In speaking to one young employee who had just been fired after nine months of work there, it was learned by Prof. Webster that this lad was the last of a gang of 40 employees who had been there when he started.

Finally, Webster strongly emphasized that Islanders should not become a "mobile labour force" because we do have roots, family and traditions.

Dr. Meincke, president of the University, spoke on the impact of computer communities on the labour force. The question of data basis will be expected in the forthcoming years.

During this decade, learning institutions such as our university will increasingly depend on the computer as an access to the world

because cut budgets will not allow for the expense of journals. We now have the ability to trade information rather than goods and tools.

The parallel was drawn by Dr. Meincke that man, who developed from the nomadic into the more stable agricultural state, is now thrust backwards into the nomadic state economically. Man now finds it necessary to follow the jobs since they are not often created where we wish to live. The President called for observation of the motivation of students to attend university. In the past few years there has been a dramatic drop in the percentage rate of 18-24 year olds in higher education.

Dr. Meincke urged that a decision soon be made on the location of the Canadian Veterinary School.

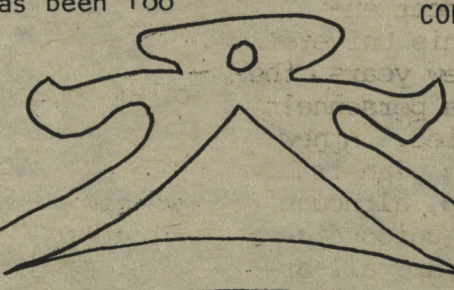
In response to a question by Mr. Allmand, the President stated that he was a great believer in the co-op system of education as offered at the University of Waterloo. He also mentioned that UPEI works with employers to get summer jobs for Business students.

Mr. Allmand then questioned that there was a lack of motivation to go to university. He felt that there has been too

much emphasis on the university and not enough on blue collar jobs. In the past, the key thought has been that "to be a success, you must go to university". He asked, "Are there people not going into anything?"

President Meincke replied that this year there has been an increase in freshman attendance across the country. Both college and universities are needed as young people are not going into the skilled trades. The difficulty now is the time lag. A degree enabling one to work on

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