



"photo by Jim Crombie"

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THE BAKER INTERVIEW

I wanted to talk to the President about the future of UPEI. The recent years have shown considerable declines in the enrollment at this university; the TREND looks like it will continue. How does Ron Baker view this trend? Generally, I got the impression he was optimistic. "Yes", he stated, "enrollment is down, it will continue to go down for maybe one or two years - then I expect the trend to reverse itself." "Why should you expect this, I can see a much more fundamental event happening than a short-run trend; maybe it is the whole philosophy and structure of our ed-

ucational system that is responsible for the decline in enrollment," I returned. Baker then went on to show me a report of Statistics Canada which, according to him, effectively showed that my assertion, of problems with the educational system, AS NOT BEING quite correct. The report was based on a survey sent out to what is known as "STOP-OUTS". (Stop-outs are students who were in the process of obtaining a degree or diploma but decided to drop-out of university). The survey virtually searched out every possible complaint a "STOP-OUT" would have. The most consistent com-

plaint that was recorded on the survey, which was sent out to some 90,000 people of which 80% responded (Unbelievable!) was the problem of job security. Students are convinced, and quite correctly, that a degree does not guarantee a job of some decency.

It became apparent, from the report that Baker produced, that the problem is not quite educational; it is, in fact, beyond educational limits, the problem is economics (as if we didn't know). The equation of declining trends equalling declining job opportunities stands as the main reason for the "stop out". It is on this point that the President found reason for optimism. He informed me that just recently he has been talking with a president of a large multi-national corporation (all bow down) who told him of a study done attempting to predict the future of the

by Joel Hansen

professional or degree holding person. The study showed that five years from now there will be a definite shortage of engineers, chemists, biologists, economists and mathematicians. The study further showed that it will be necessary to import from other continents the professionals needed to keep industry going (assuming that a major depression is not in the offing). However, there will be a large surplus of people holding degrees in English & History which will reduce the job opportunities for them. As far as language majors are concerned (especially French majors) the civil service will absorb any surplus of these people. "From this study", the President declared, "I think it is safe to say that if the job security factor is the dominant reason for declining enrollments then a change in trend is near; the job market will stabilize (all hail), "the students will return!"

The Baker Interview Revisited

It is obvious from "the Baker interview" the terms our president thinks in. His proof of a good future for UPEI is based on statistics that seem well founded, but I thought we were over the days of "THE SURVEY". Apparently Baker does not accept this notion.

More and more people, especially radical educators, are realizing the fundamental perversion of our so-called liberal educational system. Can students who are seeking knowledge (a point of much debate) be put in a market situation where degrees are purchased for the price of twenty or so courses and still feel that the whole thing is not a farce? To me this is the primary problem the educational system is fac-

ing. It is an institution which shows most dramatically the contradictions that exist in our "Western" and, more specifically, "Island" society. It has led one noted philosopher of education to state (Ivan Illich): "Educators are the best salesmen the world has ever known. They make themselves indispensable by making society addicted to the myth of the necessity of education, they are the new "Messiah".

This idea of educators as salesmen I like. Like all other commodities for sale, knowledge becomes "consumable", "portable" etc; It comes in packages called "degrees".

But these contradictions are not existing just in

university; they exist from kindergarten onward. The idea of a teacher bestowing the great wisdom, at a price, of the world through the assylum of the classroom is, in itself, perverse! How is it that knowledge of reality is gained by compulsory locking up of children in rooms with so-called "teachers"? It is a blatant contradiction. Teachers generally are those who were not experts in the field of

their endeavor; they usually are plain intellectual and emotional incompetents. Knowledge about reality is gained in reality, in the world, not in the sacred "classroom".

Psychologists are highly aware that students

gain most of their knowledge outside the classroom. The classroom situation is regarded by most students as a "bore". It is because of this fact that most students, who drop-out, drop out! Not because a big junior executive position in General Motors does not recruit them but because students are starting to realise the farce of education, of education that can be bought, of education that is boring.

Watch out Ron, ABRAXES is coming.