

Population doesn't make a university

The Senate Committee to Examine the Objectives of University Education in P.E.I. is at its halfway point right now. For the past few months they have been meeting with different public groups throughout the Island and from talking to people who participated in these discussions I found that they were excited at the fact that the university was asking for their suggestions and ideas. One person said to me that even though the committee did listen to their suggestions, she wondered if that was all - would their suggestions become reality or stay just that, suggestions.

Now it is our turn, the faculty and students of U.P.E.I., to get their two cents worth in to the committee. I am all for the purpose of the committee at this our most critical point of our young university. We have just about stifled the religious dissensions that have haunted our growth and now we (meaning the university community) are heading down the road to the city of the established universities. This is where everything should stop. Just think about it. Is this the road we want to follow? Is U.P.E.I. going to become another "traditional university"? U. of Toronto, U.B.C., McGill, Carleton, Dalhousie, do we want to follow the crowd and boast only of academic excellence in order to become one of the best.

I'll be the first to admit that I once held these institutions as those resting in the right hand of God. I thought U.P.E.I. was just a stepping stone for admittance to these epitomies of greater acquired knowledge. But when you find yourself sitting in a lecture hall with 500 other people and you don't understand which end is up in the course, you stop and realize just how lucky you were at U.P.E.I. Here, most of the time I've found, we, as students you can go to our professors and at least get straightened out about the course, plus you have a 70-30 chance that the prof will remember your name the next time he sees you.

The size of the population at an institution and the student faculty ratio has a great bearing on how

students and faculty will evaluate their years at a university. At U.P.E.I. we are fortunate enough to have a small student and faculty population. A lot of people think this is terrible since the "great" universities have populations in the thousands. What this small population does is actually set the stage for an educational experience that could challenge all existing forms of university education in North America. With the population, the people and the province could have the greatest form of post secondary education ever witnessed. Instead of the students and faculty going through the "motions" of education, they could really "experience" it.

Imagine going out to the people of P.E.I. and learning from them about their experiences, their problems, their solutions. These people of the community would benefit by being included and the university would benefit most of all by having all this experience and willingness at their disposal. Research for any discipline could be done in this manner. Instead of sweating needlessly over a term paper you know nothing about and will probably never think of again

anyway, why not do something that will give a little satisfaction. I'm sure professors know whether or not a student puts a little of himself into a paper. No wonder professors sometimes feel that their attempts at teaching are really an exercise in futility. Just think, oh learned members of the faculty, how your jobs could take on a new light if you realized that your students were actually interested in the content of your course.

Students and faculty could work together on research projects instead of against each other which is the case now - one fighting to get marks and the other fighting not to give them. Each could help the other and thus develop a person to person contact, each interested in what, how and why the other is doing something in a particular field.

To some people this may sound like an educational Utopia. But let's put it all together. The University is looking for direction after six years of getting off the ground. The university is looking for everybody's opinions and suggestions to gain direction for the coming years.

First of all, look at

what we have now (remembering there's something good in everything). Then look at what others have and what they have done with them. Lastly - look at your findings and judge them on a human viewpoint, your own personal viewpoint and how the future could affect you as a person. Even though it seems that everything around us is turning technological and automatic, always remember that only two humans can make another human and a machine will never be able to compensate for the human touch.

To the Committee on objectives - As a committee you have been asking people questions, you have heard those people talking to you. Your recommendations will come from people and as people you will write them for other people to read. Your recommendations and possible implementation of them in the future will be for the benefit of people. Don't lose the human touch. These days that can easily happen.

This weeks "Poke in the Ribs" goes to Rennie who became upset when he heard there wasn't going to be a "Poke in the Ribs" this week. Gotcha - Renaldo.

"BESIDES...JUST HOW FAR DO YOU THINK YOU CAN GET IN TODAY'S WORLD WITHOUT A GOOD EDUCATION?"

