

Interview With The President

Born in Winnipeg in 1936, Dr. Meincke graduated from the Royal Military College, received his B.Sc., in Engineering Physics at Queen's, and earned his M.A. and doctorate in Low Temperature Physics at Toronto.

He has been Associate Dean of Erindale College and has recently completed a four-year term as Vice-Provost of the University of Toronto.

He is author or co-author of more than 50 publications in Physics, Information Science, and Scale and Appropriate Technology. In 1978 he became the second President of the University of Prince Edward Island.

Sun Reporters Chris Baxter and Pat Moore recently spoke with Dr. Meincke.

SUN: Is the MPHEC report favorable to U.P.E.I.? Is that what U.P.E.I. was looking for in the way of financing?

P.Meincke: The overall increase of 12% to sustain the system is the same number that the University had calculated was necessary.

SUN: Are you happy with the increase?

P.M.: Yes, very happy. It's the first time it's happened in a long time.

(The MPHEC recommended that the universities receive 12% increase. This increase still must be ratified by the Provincial Govt.)

SUN: Why do you think that U.P.E.I. did receive such a favorable budget?

P.M.: I'm not sure why they came out with that particular number but I can tell you that even though there seems to be a decline in everything else. The way they have done the calculations in the past is always to look to the past as to how much the funding should increase and since over the past few years our costs have been going up dramatically every year. Even the percentage increase over the previous year

has been going up, the percentage increase that they recommended was based on what had happened in the previous year and so therefore was lower than what we needed and now this year when the costs are coming down they are still

consistent and looking to the past year when our cost went up an enormous amount and saying this is what is needed to maintain the system.

SUN: In your opinion, what courses specifically are at the core of a university education?

P.M.: I think the real question is what the student should be when the student graduates. One thing the student should be able to do is communicate effectively, now whether that means that an English course is at the core or not is not the question. The question is how you get the student to this position of being able to communicate effectively. You can do that through English courses or you can do that through asking everyone in the university to take that part of the teaching job.

There are other ways of communicating—through graphs, through tables of figures, through equations and in fact people talk about both literacy and numeracy.

Those are two but even more important and this is a capability that can be learned in any number of disciplines that is the capacity for critical thought....

The capacity to continue to learn is now more important than ever before as the knowledge explosion occurs. You've got to be able to continue to learn and want to continue to learn. So that's one of the things we wish to inculcate.

If you talk about core courses that may be different for different discipline

SUN: It's apparent that the Senate Planning Committee is going to have to plan for cut-backs. Where might these cut-backs be made?



President Meincke

P.M.: What we've been doing over the past few years in the budget committee is trying to make sure that the cuts are as equitable as possible. We've not been assigning priorities....

The Senate Committee task is to look at the long range academic priorities. Setting priorities is a very tricky business, saying this is more important than that is basically what you are saying. We may say in the end that we think there other ways of solving this problem...one of these days the universities will have to set some academic priorities and it's not easy.

SUN: Is it that difficult to set priorities. They seem essential.

P.M.: Yes, it is. At universities the difficulty arises—everyone has his or her own set of priorities.

SUN: Should the universities in the Maritimes specialize in individual areas since they are all reasonably accessible to all Maritime students—not to the exclusion of non-speciality areas?

P.M.: I don't know if its out of the question. I have gone on record as saying that is something we should try to do—certainly in the areas of medicine law, and veterenary medicine. In the Arts and Science there has been a little bit of this. Some Island students are tied to the Island. It is not economically feasible for them to

move off the Island. But the question I raise is it better to continue to offer a major we offer now to one student while not being able to offer a major in a new area and 40 or 50 students have to go off the Island...

SUN: Is it (pronounced)

Men-keu or Men-key?

P.M.: It's Mine-keu.

SUN: There seems to be a fear among some faculty members and students that the Business School is going to take over the University.

What's your position?

P.M.: I'm tempted to say not as long as I'm President because... your reaction to that will be I made them a separate school and so on. That doesn't in any way suggest that I am trying to get the business school to take over the university. Last year there were recommendations that the Business School limit enrollments. We have tried very hard not to limit enrollments in any program but there comes a time when you want to make sure that the balance of the enrollment is maintained. But that has implications that there may be students who aren't able to get into the Business program or into Engineering...

SUN: What is your impression of the student newspaper?

P.M.: I think everybody, including the students working on it agree that it could be improved. Well I am the first to agree that we can improve the way that we're doing things at the university. It is a great opportunity for people to develop communication skills....

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