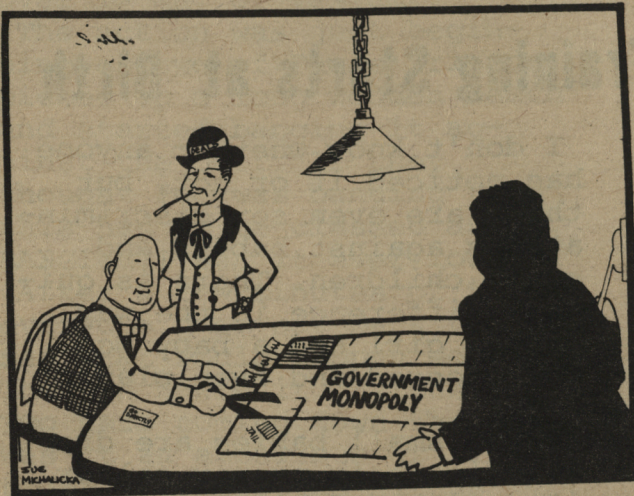




Kampus Koncern

by Joel Hansen

LAND USE AND OTHER RELATED STUFF



NEW RULES TO AN OLD GAME

The government side of the land use issue was heard at a student confrontation with government planner James Allison last Tuesday afternoon and evening as a part of a continuing series of encounters with various groups, organizations, etc., being conducted by the "underdevelopment" class at UPEI.

The discussion started slowly with Mr. Allison outlining the recommendations of the Report on Land Use given to government earlier in the winter. It included various zoning recommendations designed to maintain prime agricultural land and correctly designate land for housing, industry and tourist concerns.

Mr. Allison noted, however, that the government had yet to hear the views of the majority of Islanders on the vital issue of land use. He stated that in the main, islanders are a "reactive bunch" great to complain but less than great in participating in government planning. He informed the students that whenever the Land Use Committee conducted public hearings, only a tiny segment of the public attended. "As a matter of fact", joked Allison, "the last meeting of the committee that I attended had approximately forty people in attendance of which twenty-five were civil servants."

Stan Dalton asked if this reactionary mentality perva-

ding the citizens of P.E.I. was not directly related to the style of leadership and government the island has had since it became a reality some 300 years ago. Dalton argued that the people of the island had been shunned by the various regimes in Ch'town as far as planning on any level was concerned and if the government now intended to seek public participation it would have to re-educate the people of P.E.I. in realizing the importance and usefulness of public involvement in the decision making process. "This whole area of public participation in government planning seems contrary to the modis operandi of Prince Edward Islanders," claimed Dalton.

The validity of Dalton's argument was not challenged by Jim Allison, who surprisingly, agreed with Dalton's view. Allison added fuel to the fire by stating that he believed the current centralization of power from the local communities to Province House in Ch'town ran contrary to the ideals of a democratic society on P.E.I. and to the possibility of active participation by the mass of people on this island in government decision making.

When asked what specifically the government was doing to restrict the sale of land to non-residents of P.E.I. Allison replied that this was a matter of top priority with the present Administration. He informed the discussion group that at present, government lawyers are drafting legislation to strengthen the present laws restricting land sale to non-residents of P.E.I. A prime target of the new legislation, stated Allison, will be mainland agri-business who wish to establish vertical integration of agriculture. "In essence they will not be allowed such monopolization since the present policy of the government favours marketing-board control of the agri-business on P.E.I.," Allison said.

At this point one of the students questioned the government-aid servant if

collectivization was a goal of present government policy. Allison replied that this is necessarily so, especially in reference to the concept of government control of land-use. He was then asked if government control runs congruent to collectivization in the use of land on P.E.I. He replied that gov-

ernment control, in the eyes of the present Administration, means community control of land zoning for use on the island. "The government simply wishes to identify the community's interest through dialogue with the people and then implement through government legislation," claimed Jim Allison. "Of course the contradiction of lack of public participation in the present decision making process with that policy lies like a worm at the center of the government's intent," he admitted. "However, the government's aim at present is on gaining public participation in the formation of laws on land use and, therefore, the government is intent on taking the steps necessary to "prime the vox-pop" by presenting proposals to the people of P.E.I. and noting their reaction," informed Allison.

This method of articulating the public interest was seen as contradictory by most students in attendance. "It's mystifying the issue", argued Stan Dalton.

Everybody in attendance agreed, however, that it was a problem that can only be solved by the people making themselves aware of their responsibilities in the political arena.

As the dialogue with Jim Allison came to an end the students seemed surprised and relieved that a government bureaucrat could have such an open-minded political consciousness. "It hopefully reflected a radically new attitude on the part of government," noted Prof. Gary Webster (Poli. Sci.), "It's now a job for the media on P.E.I. to get this message across to the people immediately."

This article serves that desire.