

The Year in Review

By **CHRISTOPHER MICHAUD**

Well, fellow classmates. It seems another school year has come to an end. For some of us, it is time to put down our school bags and pick up tassels and briefcases, as we head to graduation, and the uncertain job market. Anybody bring bait? Watch out for sharks, and good luck to the Class of 1997.

For the rest of us who are less fortunate and are to be retained by these stone walls, the most we can look forward to is the continuous cycle of working underpaying jobs for the summer, and returning next fall. Has everybody got a summer job yet? It almost brings a tear to my eye just thinking about it.

Those of you that know me know that I enjoy griping about the system, and a few other things. Guess what? I haven't even begun to gripe. I figure it is now time for the "Year In Review". Ya'll ready for this?

The 1996/97 Academic Year at UPEI began with a bang, as tuition was up over last year...again. On top of the tuition increase was a dark fiend new to us, the Building Fund. They, the "System", called it a Mandatory Donation, and non-refundable, too. Now what the HELL is that?! We donate because we HAVE to?! Did we all miss a memo or something? Well, according to our absent-centred Student Union, we did miss a memo...among other things. Speaking, for the last time this year, of tuition increases, watch out for the new provincial government budget to be dropped on the table soon. If it is as bad as predicted, expect a tuition increase next year...again. This is something I warned about back in September/October (ie an increase sometime after the New Year, to which a SU rep replied, "to the best of my knowledge, there are NO plans to increase tuition"), so be prepared to find something to replace those moths in your wallets.

This year has been earmarked in history by a number of interesting events. The first was, of course, the "Burns-Grey" shuffle in the Student Union. We know the story behind Burns' coming to power, and his subsequent fall from grace. Since Grey has taken over the reins, has anybody noticed any changes? Has anybody noticed ANYTHING? Of course not, we have barely heard a peep from that red building on the far side of campus...again. Which reminds me, they act like a bunch from the Far Side. Aside from their 45 second decision to increase our fees and other such bungles, any good from there? Besides our continued apathy...again...don't expect things to change.

The latest fiasco would be last Wednesday's handling of the snowstorm crisis by UPEI administration officials. The first news reports we all awoke to was that campus would open at 10:30 am. Those of us who live close enough to walk, began our trudges through already knee-high snow and gusty topple-you-over-treat-you-like-a-kite winds towards campus, only to discover that, by the time we got our snow-covered bodies into a warm building, campus was closed until 1 pm. Apparently, no one had heard the change announced until 10:25 on local radio stations. And when classes were cancelled for the day (by 12:30), a few of us had arrived on campus snow-soaked for the second time that day. If the RCMP was recommending everyone stay off the roads unless absolutely necessary and portions of the Trans-Canada were closed, why wasn't one decision made early enough?

My last and final complaint (had enough yet?) is very simple, and it is one I voiced last year at this time. Anybody remember my piece on "R.I.P."? No, no, not "Rest In Peace". Rather, it stands for "Retirement Incentives Program", but the misnomer is

fitting enough. By this "program", the university has been able to save money. How? The retirement of tenured faculty, replaced by sessionals. We've all heard the pros and cons on sessionals and the loss of tenured faculty members, the whole idea of saving money. What we seem to have forgotten, or at least what the university's Board of Directors has overlooked, is the people that we are losing, put out to pasture (sorry!) before their time. Last year, we lost

the poetic genius of Frank Ledwell and the timelessness of Brendan O'Grady. Joining their ranks this year, will be the gentleness of Prof. Foley; the hearty theatrics of Ian Gallo-way; and my favourite, the...the...well, as my mother said, "can't be described in three words", un-sum-up-able Charles Blouin. Their presences in the classrooms are and will be greatly missed. There are, of course, many others that deserve mention, but I just don't know them, and

wish I did.

So, as we step off the stage after our fifteen seconds in the limelight, or as we leave our last exam room for this year, let us look towards a new year with at least a little hope. Put aside the new faces on campus, the loss of dear friends, the higher cost of education, the impotent student union, the apathetic student body, and...well...at least that's one less year to go.

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