

the President 1978-79-80?



Dr. Paul Vincent Cassano

people from the university's board of governors went on record as being opposed to this procedure.

Board of Governors member Eldon Thompson stated that this procedure probably deterred potential candidates. Saint John Mayor Sam Davis (an ex-official member) was quoted in the *Telegraph-Journal* as saying the procedure was much like running for mayor, and agreed with Thompson that this aspect of the nomination procedure was not good for attracting candidates.

Editorially in the press, as well as on the radio, the criticism of this two-hour university community meeting was intense. In an editorial on August 3, 1979, former mayor (and hence former Board of Governors member) Bob Lockhart on CFBC chastised the

Senate for this procedure, and stated that the Board of Governors should act to reduce the power of the Senate. Lockhart suggested that the Senate was more interested in 'faculty tennis courts' and the like than fulfilling its academic responsibilities. The *Saint John Telegraph-Journal* and the *Daily Gleaner* both ran editorials suggesting that this presentation and question and answer period was a 'dog show' (in the case of the *Telegraph*) and a 'bearpit' (in the case of the *Gleaner*).

The search committee had made the decision to nominate Dr. Paul Cassano as its candidate for UNB president. Dr. Cassano is the Dean of Arts at the University of Windsor in Ontario. In the week ending August 4, 1979, he was here at UNB for several

by J. DAVID MILLER

Bearpit Session?

Between sampling trips, I found myself in Fredericton in the midst of the great bearpit debate. I was aware that students could attend the meeting with Dr. Cassano, but I think I ended up going that overcast Wednesday because I was the only *Brunswickan* staffer in sight.

I can only say that in many ways it was quite a sight to see. Hundreds of professors going to a lecture hall; literally streaming into Head Hall.

Dr. Israel Unger opened the meeting and stated the ground rules. Dr. Unger said that the meeting was open to the university community, (faculty, students and staff) and anyone who didn't qualify should leave. He said that Dr. Cassano would make a short presentation and then those present could ask questions of the candidate.

Dr. Cassano's presentation took about an hour. He stated his academic qualifications and his current research interests. He then discussed in some detail his work experience as he saw it relating to the job of UNB president.

Dr. Cassano started at the University of Windsor about 10 years ago. His progress up the ladder seems somewhat above average. Two years ago he was elected president of the faculty union at Windsor and spent "thousands of hours" around the bargaining table negotiating that "all important first contract". He tried to emphasize that this experience gave him a pretty good picture of the problems of both sides, and that if he were appointed management here at UNB (where the faculty is presently working on a first contract) his experience would be valuable to UNB.

The University of Windsor has undergone drastic (20%) reductions in student populations in recent years. Dr. Cassano outlined the steps he had been involved in managing faculty size and stabilizing the enrolment. UNB has not suffered this decline, and Cassano noted that this experience at a university where a decline had taken place would be useful to combat the potential decline here.

meetings with officials, senators, governors and the university community. He also spent a day at UNBSJ.

Dr. Cassano will be at UNB again in a few weeks for more meetings and there will be a joint meeting of the Senate and Board of Governors to decide on his acceptability. At that time, the search committee will present, move and second only Dr. Cassano. Other candidates can be nominated at that meeting by Senate and Board of Governors members.

Dr. Cassano spent quite a while discussing the philosophy of university governance in the light of faculty unionization. He made it clear that he could see no conflict between the academic responsibilities of the Senate and faculty unions wishing to preserve their numbers and programs.

Dr. Cassano also talked about his experience in lobbying government to pay more attention to the universities. Apparently he was part of a group of professors who descended on the cafeteria of the legislature in Ontario and buttonholed anyone they could find to talk about university funding. He stated, several times, that it was important to keep the general public aware of what universities were doing. He also suggested more research involvement with various government agencies on local problems.

Dr. Cassano did not say too much about students, but then there were not too many students there. He did talk about programs he had been involved with to fit the course offerings with respect to time, place, and content, to when the students could take them. He said at Windsor it was found that many courses were being given when students couldn't take them. That is, courses available at night were wanted in the day and vice-versa. Problems of enrolment affect us all because lowered enrolment means reduced courses and higher fees, and so thus many of those comments were pertinent to students.

The question period opened, and the first serious question concerned how Dr. Cassano himself felt about a meeting of this kind. The questioner noted that the local paper had termed it a bearpit. Dr. Cassano said that he had been informed right at the outset that this meeting was a part of the search procedure adopted by UNB. He said that he was prepared to make the presentation and field questions. It was a little surprising (to me) but quite a number of rhetorical (to be kind) questions were asked by various professors, some of which would have rivalled those asked at an SRC meeting.

There will be another 'bearpit' session early in term. The August one was interesting, but I felt it academic, on the whole. It is up to the members of the Board and Senate to make these decisions. It is up to them to examine a candidate far more carefully than is possible at a public meeting. It would have been more useful, in my opinion, for the search committee to have obtained from Dr. Cassano a written presentation of his speech and make it generally available. Still, a gathering of the professoriate is impressive, and probably will not happen again for years.