

UNB

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The granting of honorary degrees is one connection between university and community. However due to the criteria a candidate for an honorary degree must have, the community-association is only with the socially elite; top business officials, politicians, professionals, academics, and so forth. This adds to the grandeur of the university, placing it on a pedestal far above the common man. Yet it is the common man the university relies on for its existence. He is expected to send his sons and daughters to university to receive a suitable education and perhaps gain some degree of prominence.



Ceremonial portrait of the honorary degree recipients. Left to right (front row) Honorable Hedard Robichaud, Sir Max Aitken, President John M. Anderson; (centre row) Paul Gorham, Charles Hughes, Reginald Tweeddale, John Junor, Robert Fairweather; (back row) Robert Love, David Baird.

Public relations

Let's face it - honorary degrees are good public relations. Those who receive them should be those known and respected in their field. Therefore it is most important that the recipients be of exceptional merit.

Keeping this in mind is it necessary that every Premier of New Brunswick, every Minister of Education, every Lieutenant Governor, receive an honorary degree? Certainly, since this is a provincial university, it should recognize the provincial government and its officers. Yet, in granting these degrees, we should be careful not to award individuals solely on the merit of the office they have attained, but rather on the merit of their work in that office.

Such considerations should also govern the presentation of degrees to politicians outside New Brunswick. Past recipients include Robert Winters (Cabinet Minister under Lester Pearson), Brendan Bracken (Churchillian Cabinet minister), W.A.C. Bennett (then Premier of B.C.), Jean-Eudes Dube (Cabinet Minister under Pierre Trudeau).

By granting degrees to professors, presidents and chancellors, UNB recognizes both the achievements of individuals and their universities. In this way UNB gains the recognition of these institutions.

Honorary degrees awarded to businessmen indicate UNB's recognition of success in a practical sector of society. It could also, and apparently does, present the opportunity for donations to the university.

It looks very impressive for an institution to have one of its members or employers receive an honorary degree. Surely the Chancellor of UNB who owns Beaverbrook Newspapers Ltd., does not mind having his employees so honoured. After all, it shows not only the assets of the individual but of the institution he represents.

Most recently we have seen persons of high position in British newspapers, particularly the Daily Express and the Sunday Express, receive honorary degrees.

Both of these newspapers are part of the Beaverbrook newspaper chain, owned by Sir Max. These persons were John Gordon, Thomas Blackburn, Derek Marks, and this year John Junor.

and the women?

It should be noted that the number of females who have received honorary degrees from UNB is much smaller than the number of males. Unfortunately there are still far fewer career women than career men.

Nevertheless there must be more than a handful of women worthy of recognition.

Two women have been honoured as presidents of universities, both from Mount St. Vincent university in Halifax. No females have received recognition as lawyers. Only a few female professors, scientists, and school teachers have been awarded honorary degrees. A couple of female politicians, Senator Muriel Ferguson and Margaret Chase Smith,

US Senator and member of House of Representatives, received degrees. Only a couple of businesswomen, one of whom was Laura McCain, president of McCain Produce Company, were given honorary degrees by UNB.

It appears that UNB does not mind giving honorary degrees to New Brunswickers who have made their successes outside the province. A good example is W.A.C. Bennett, a New Brunswick native who moved to British Columbia and became Premier of that province. Should not the university first consider those of our province who have achieved their success here, and thereby added something to New Brunswick?

The university reaches out into many sectors of society to choose recipients of honorary degrees. The university should choose those of high calibre, outstanding performance and unquestionable integrity. The university should not merely sell degrees or allow individuals of influence to push nominations for honorary degrees.