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# New Vet's College is controversial issue

by Kim Marchant (using material printed in The Daily News, Feb. 28)

In spite of Prince Edward Island premier Angus Maclean's announcement that his province will begin construction of a new Maritime veterinary college, there is still a great deal of controversy over the matter. Many people who are involved in agriculture are upset and claim that the issue has become political as opposed to remaining educational. Dr. Herbert F. Macrae, principal of the Nova Scotia Agricultural College, drew support from several sources when he said in a statement on the proposed regional veterinary college that, "the close relationship education for veterinary medicine and education for agriculture, which has existed for a long time, is currently becoming even stronger."

"Without exception in Canada, education in veterinary medicine is integrated with the agricultural science and/or other educational programs", says the Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture in a report on the topic of an Atlantic veterinary college.

A second agricultural interest group, New Brunswick Institute of Agrologists, said in a report of their own that, "We emphasize that veterinary medicine is only one of many disciplines supporting agriculture, and students enrolled in veterinary medicine should not be isolated from other facets."

Dr. Macrae stated that previously, "(A) the federal government made its first approach to Nova Scotia and the Nova Scotia Agricultural College to consider the establishment of a veterinary college; (B) that Mr. Whelan supported the Nova Scotia proposal to locate it in association with the N.S.A.C. and (C) that the province of Nova Scotia supported the continued planning with the federal government." He went on to say, "It must be noted that since that time and to the present date, the previous and present governments in Nova Scotia have supported Truro as the preferred site."

In 1970, Agriculture Canada carried out a study through its health of animals branch to assess the need for veterinary graduates in Canada. The study was headed by Professor T.L. Jones, a former dean of the Ontario Veterinary College, and Dr. W.A. Moynih, a former member of the health of animals branch. They concluded that there was an ever-increasing demand for veterinary graduates.

In 1973, the Deputy Minister of Agriculture indicated that there was a need for another veterinary college in Canada.

In October of the same year a meeting of Ministers and Deputy Ministers of agriculture was held to which Dr.

Macrae was invited. They discussed the matter of a veterinary college being built in Truro in conjunction with the N.S.A.C. and decided that the issue should be pursued.

In August, 1974, Dr. K.E. Wells, then veterinary director general for Agriculture Canada, visited the N.S.A.C. to discuss the federal governments desire to establish a veterinary college with the N.S. Department of Agriculture and the N.S.A.C.A. section of minutes taken in a meeting on August 24th read, "Dr. Wells stated that this has been discussed by their department and with their minister, Mr. Whelan. He stated further that Mr. Whelan strongly favoured the suggestion made by the province of Nova Scotia that consideration be given to the establishment of a fourth school to be located in Truro and tied in with N.S.A.C."

Dr. Macrae was requested to inform the Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission (MPHEC) of the developments which had already taken place between N.S., the college and the federal government. This was done and the MPHEC engaged Dr. H.G. Howell, then dean of the Ontario Veterinary College, to develop a study on the most appropriate site for the college. According to Dr. Macrae, after Howell's first visit to N.S.A.C., Howell stated clearly to all that the obvious and preferred location for a regional veterinary college was in Truro associated with the agricultural college and with easy accessibility to Dalhousie medical faculty and its library. "The supplements to his report stated, "Discussions with Dalhousie indicated that affiliation with a veterinary college at Truro would be feasible and acceptable. "Dr. Howell submitted his report to the MPHEC in August 1975 and it was made public that fall that he had recommended Charlottetown as his preferred site. The Commission accepted the recommendations of the Howell Report and they were submitted to the Council of Maritime Premiers who announced their final decision to have the college built in P.E.I. a few weeks ago.

Many were surprised, including the NSFA, the N.S. Institute of Agrologists, the NBIA, the province of Nova Scotia and the staff of the N.S.A.C. that the Howell report was endorsed before the matter was turned over to the Council of Maritime Premiers. Dr. Macrae raised the following question in his statement to the press last month, "Is there any relationship between Dr. Howell and Mr. Whelan's decisions to change their minds?" Dr. Macrae continued

to say that the Howell Report, "is contradictory throughout in terms of the criteria established for the location of such a school and the conclusions made by Dr. Howell. We have not found any individual, any professional group or knowledgeable body of people who are prepared to defend its contents. To our knowledge it is the only one-man report prepared for the Commission which has not been subjected to analyses and scrutiny by an expert group."

"The Howell Report to me is completely unfounded" said Don Gunn Sr., chairman of the education committee of the NSIA. It is so empty, and there was so little we could agree with." Mr Gunn says that the institute is in favour of the veterinary college being located in Truro for two main reasons; the first being that veterinary medicine should not be separated from agriculture, and the second that to build a veterinary college in Charlottetown "would not only remove the very substantial complimentary effect essential for both programs, but would jeopardize the future of agriculture education and ultimately the leadership of the agriculture industry in Atlantic Canada."

"The most effective, lowest cost, and logical way of establishing a college of veterinary medicine in this region is by building on the excellent facility already established at the agricultural college "said a spokesman for the NSIA.

Mr. Whelan has promised that construction of the veterinary college will not begin until the four provinces reach an agreement on the matter. Jim McNiven, Executive Vice-President of the Atlantic Provinces Economic Council said, "All four provinces must agree, or its back to the drawing board, and relations between Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island will be pretty cool." When asked what might happen if Nova Scotia fails to reach an agreement with P.E.I. he said that the Island would have to come up with Nova Scotia's financial share elsewhere, and that they would gain some of it through the tuition fees of students from Nova Scotia attending the veterinary college.

Things are up in the air at present, and as Mr. Gunn said, "Premier Buchanan's stand is a hard stand to take alone."

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