

Pound of cure before ounce of prevention??

The Academic and Campus Planning Committee (ACPC) has produced a report which is meant to steer the University of New Brunswick into the twenty-first century. A committee made up of administrators and academics took over one year to consider the needs of the university in relation to speculations of future decline in student enrolment and hence government funding. This report has not been made widely available and indeed those who have had access to it have found it rather difficult to wade through.

It is impossible to detail the problems which can be found with this report. It would be untrue to suggest that the whole report is not useful. Many of the recommendations seem to make perfect sense, and are justified by the data presented. On the other hand, many of the recommendations are arbitrary and appear to have no basis in reality.

As with any problem, one can either treat the symptoms or the cause. To apply another old saw, one can come up with an ounce of prevention or render a pound of cure. If the recommendations set forth in the ACPC report are adopted, the symptoms of the malaise being experienced at UNB will be treated, and, as with treatment with a patent medicine, the cause can only grow worse. Putting it the other way, the ACPC report suggests that a pound of cure applied right this minute is better than a judicious ounce of prevention.

Declining enrolments and government-imposed economies mean that 100 faculty positions and 250 courses must face the axe, according to the report. Once hundred faculty positions and two hundred and fifty courses must go, but not a single Dean or Vice President or minion in the Comptrollers office can be spared.

It is impossible to read the report without coming to the rather strange conclusion that it was written by defeatists and bookkeepers. Maintain the *status quo*, just get out the old business calculator and fire a few professors.

This university is one of the finest in all of Canada and hence the world. In the face of declining enrolments overall, we must get out there and fight for the student's dollar. We must become very active in informing the public as to the kinds of work we do here so that the citizens of New Brunswick will be proud to

send their sons and daughters here. We must maintain our standards so that the problems faced by lots of universities which used to be highly regarded and have now become of somewhat dubious quality will not be seen at UNB. We must be renowned for our flexible programs and excellence of our teaching staff. This is not a loser province and does not deserve a loser University.

The Brunswickan is here to tell the authors of this defeatist report that you just don't fire a few professors. You fire a few administrators, you have the floors cleaned less, you turn the heat down, you cut the losses on the ancillary enterprises like the residences and the Aitken Centre, you put less salt on the roads, mow the lawns less, make the president pay rent for his house and car instead of just taxes, you stop throwing so many damn secret memos around, and when you've done all these and more then you plead and beg the government for more money to maintain the academic staff. You must fight and scrape and dig to maintain the flexibility of our programs and the excellence of our academic staff.

If this means that the megalithic empires of the

Registrar, Comptroller and Physical Plant have to be cut down, then so be it. British and many American Corporate Universities which have had to fight for survival for years do entirely without such expensive luxuries. Far fewer administrators per student are used to run Harvard and Oxford Universities than the University of New Brunswick.

There are ways to cut costs. A report to steer this university into the twenty-first century should have said let us fight to maintain our course offerings and staff at all costs. This resounding kick against the very purpose of University must be questioned by the faculty and all students.

It is said that the provincial government appreciates certain aspects of this ACPC report. People have even suggested that it goes to some measure to satisfy government demands to rationalize the spending of this University. The Brunswickan does not believe, and will refuse to believe that Mr. Hatfield and his government wishes UNB to be turned into a second class university. It is, however, possible to believe that the government wishes to hear of our priorities. Let us tell them that the priority is to maintain academic quality at all costs.

Universities used to be run by the Academic Staff. This one, if the report is any measure, is being run by accountants. It is clear to The Brunswickan that the practice and philosophy of the ACPC report is entirely unfavourable to the survival of this university as a quality institution. If the same is not clear to the faculty, we are indeed in trouble.

It is said in the report that we are in a crisis situation, money wise. We are indeed in a crisis. We are in a crisis if this report is not re-examined in some detail, and an approach which is more in keeping with what Mr. Hatfield's government really demands of us is met. What is really demanded of us is that we turn out people with high quality education. These people are now students.

If the report is not reconsidered? Well, I suppose The Brunswickan might be annoyed. The hundred or so profs who are doomed to their unemployment cheques will probably be upset. But most of all, on into the twenty-first century, one might not be able to find students here. They would have gone to a good university which used an ounce of prevention instead of a pound of cure.



Linda H.