

Chancellor takes new approach

Still clad in his overcoat, his eyes darted around the room.

It was supposed to be an interview, but Chancellor Louis Desrochers, a 45-year-old city lawyer most of the time, was late for a speaking assignment at Chamber of Commerce luncheon in Lister Hall.

As the titular head of the university chancellor presides at Convocation and confers all degrees, and is a non-voting member of the board of governors and chairman of the Senate. Unlike the queen, he goes unpaid.

His is a hectic life, "but I'm not a martyr," he laughs. "I've enjoyed my term as chancellor.

At a time when figurehead positions are under attack, Desrochers has launched a new approach to the role of chancellor.

Once nothing more than a social club, the University of Alberta Senate has become an active body probing complex issues that face post-secondary education.

Desrochers refuses to take credit for the change, directing most of the praise to a committee that studied the Senate two years ago.

But insiders know he has provided the effective leadership needed by any massive organization, particularly one at the forefront of university-community relations.

Nearing the end of his five-year term, the bilingual Desrochers is well suited for the job of titular head of the university.

A versatile, personable man, he conducts his business with flair. Simply, he's got style.

A special Senate committee, headed by Edmonton broadcaster Fil Fraser, chose Ron Dalby, a Canadian Utilities Ltd. executive, to replace Desrochers who retires as chancellor June 30.

Desrochers, who was not involved with the selection committee, said he was "extremely pleased" with the decision.

The Senate which meets four times a year, is a body of representatives of both the university and community. Community leaders, among them businessmen and housewives, are recruited to serve on task forces, whose reports are the lifeblood of the senate.

The primary function of the senate is to "generate a great deal of activity in inquiry," says Desrochers. "That has been done



Louis Desrochers

through the task forces."

They comprise the most important achievements of the senate during his term of office, he adds.

Holding meetings off campus, bringing the university closer to the public at large, is another achievement, he said. In the last 12 months, senate meetings have been held in Red Deer and Camrose.

At one time, the Senate was the most important decision-making body on campus. But the provincial government, stripped the senate of most of its powers. They now fall under the jurisdiction of general faculties council.

Desrochers, however, disagrees with those who think the Senate should have more power.

A powerful chancellor "would be stepping on the toes of the university president and the chairman of the board of governors," he said.

Senate task force reports have been criticized for lacking punch, but Desrochers counters that the senate is more concerned with presenting views, not enforcing them.

"Each report deals with issues close to a university policy," he said. "You just can't come on like a bull in a china shop. The issues are too complex."

He maintains that if the reports are carefully made and accurate, government and university administrations will take note of them.

What about the future? "My hope is that everyone treats the senate as responsible as possible and that the Senate not be used for selling the joys of university."

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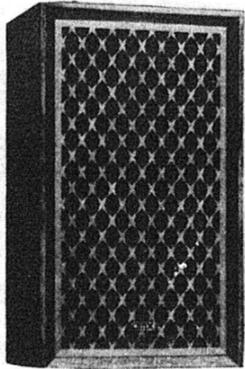
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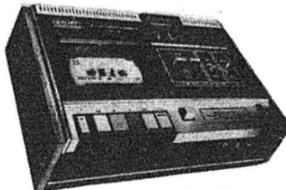
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