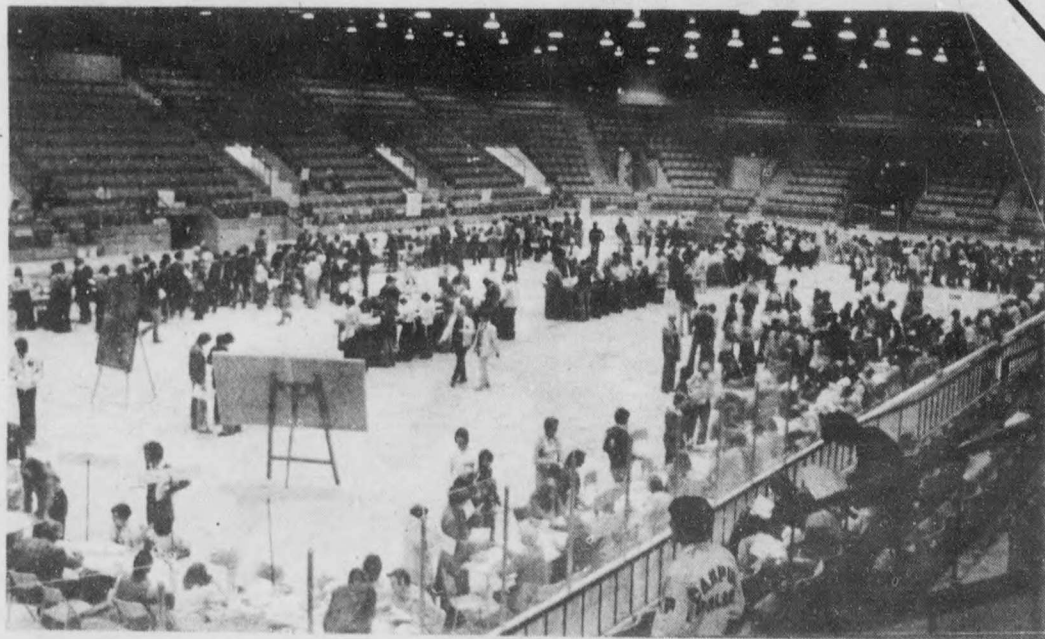


## AITKEN CENTRE



By J. DAVID MILLER

Editor's note: Mr. Miller, author of the following article, was directly and heavily involved in the development of the Aitken University Center. Because of this, the reader will observe that this feature is written in a rather personal way.

I would like to report on the Aitken University Centre, both to the Student Union, and to the students at large. There will be two parts to this feature. This issue will present a discussion of what that great large edifice on the hill can provide, and next week a discussion on concerts, skating hockey games, and economics.

I would like to begin with the rather astonishing statement that next to Tibbitts Hall, the AUC is the best planned building on campus. I will go even further and say that it is, with great certainty, the best building of its type and size in this part of the world.

The part of the design I have been most concerned and interested with is those areas pertaining to the staging of non-athletic events, especially concerts, ice shows, dinners, and the like.

In the face of mounting costs, it becomes very difficult to decide what must stay and what has to go.

From my point of view, and more importantly, from that of the university, nothing should be done which irrevocably alters the building to such an extent that the particular feature in question cannot be added in the future without tearing the building down.

The considerations then for concerts in AUC, which have been a priority item with council since Roy Neale was the president of the Student Union (that's three years

ago and some), can be listed as follows: 1) acoustics, 2) electrical power, 3) stage and 4) dressing rooms.

The acoustics of a building that large are inevitably poor. At least that's the cliché. I am happy to say that we can provide proof of the fact that a building of that configuration can have good acoustics.

The key to good acoustics in a structure lies in planning right from the concept stage. Although the rink surface does determine the essential shape of the building, various adjustments of length, width, and height determine the nature of the basic acoustical environment. At square one, the architects went to the National Research Council (NRC) with the basic design and had NRC acoustic experts feed the relevant data into the computer and see if the basic design was reasonable.

The second major factor in the acoustics of such a large building is a consideration of all of the materials present within the building to see how they will effect various factors of sound quality, especially reverberation time. When the building was dosed in, measurements were taken of the reverberation time of sound within the building on the basis of these measurements, calculations were made as to the number of "sound absorbing units" that would be required to bring the reverberation time to acceptable values. When this was known, Professor Garland, who is for all intents and purposes, the project director, located a company which manufactured passive devices, which would work at AUC. These devices are those little cylindrical objects hanging down from the roof of the building and there are nearly 3,000 of them.

The point is, the building has the essential characteristics of a low reverberation time, and flat response. "There is no echo, and it doesn't sound tinny."

There is one small problem with the glass shields for the boards causing reflections of sound on the rink level, but this can be cured with good sound system management.

As for the considerations of electrical power and stage, it can be said that AUC can handle anything that is put in there without very much difficulty. The dressing rooms are adequate for the dual purposes of team rooms and concert dressing rooms with one problem which I will mention later.

For the spectator of an event, entrances and exits are more than adequate and convenient. These exist on a problem in moving people on and off the floor for a stage event or dinner - but with proper signs are placed and the main stair towers are used as was intended, the problem will be minimized.

I have discussed many of the positive aspects of the building. Good acoustics, good layout, good sound system, good athletic facilities and most importantly, the fact that nothing was done which prohibits the addition of left features like a stage lighting system. There must be some negative features in all that, and there are indeed. However, they are few in number and do not constitute major blunders.

The ones that stand out in my mind are: 1) The scoreclock is far too small and inadequate. Unless you have 20-20 vision it is not possible to see the scoreclock beyond about 50 feet. Since this information is available in several good textbooks, I can only assume that the clock was chosen without reference to those books. A solution, more small ones could be added in various locations, or a bigger one could be purchased.

2) The ice-making plant is PROBABLY not adequate for maintaining the rink during the summer months. Eventually a solution, one of the two ice-making machines could be increased in size. (The smaller than the other)

3) The boards are not very strong. It is conceivable that they would fail a hockey game, and it is likely that they be strengthened in some way relatively soon.

4) The dressing rooms have a perimeter of asphalt-like boards on the floor to protect skates from the concrete floor. Skaters will notice that if a player is sitting on the wall bench, they will have to get on to the floor with their skates to get around that player, defeating the purpose of these tiles. Current practice in rinks of that size is to carpet the dressing rooms with a special loop pile carpet which will not cut. This is not only cheaper, but the dressing rooms are much more pleasant, and certainly makes them more attractive for use as concert dressing rooms.

5) The "Rink-Tex" covering is sensitive to staining and burning. There is no doubt in my mind that pubs and concerts should not occur with such

# Inside the Aitken Centre