

UNIVERSITY NEWSBEAT

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The President Reports

The University: Funds and Future

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In reviewing the events of the intervening weeks since the Board last met in June, I believe there is not a great deal for me to report by way of detail. On the other hand, the large questions concerning the future of this University, in particular, and higher education, in general, continue to be very much in the minds of all of us. Perhaps, therefore, I might take a few minutes to describe some of those matters which currently occupy our attention.

There are three areas which, combined together provide a commentary on the future.

1. As you know, a number of the administrative officers and academic administrators gathered together for a "retreat" near Toronto, for three days last June.

The Board of Governors was represented by the Chairman and Mr. Greg Cooper. Those discussions were comprehensive and frank, providing all of those present with an opportunity to consider the University in perspective and to discuss the relationship of their particular functions.

Following the retreat, the Chairman of the New Initiatives Task Force, Dean Roger Schwass, prepared a Report which, although rather general in nature, does suggest a number of lines for the future. This is currently under review by the Policy Committee and we will be devoting the better part of the day, on September 26th, to detailed consideration of an action plan on the various items pinpointed in the Report.

In addition, I am presently studying the Phase II Report of the Non-Academic Functions Task Force which was submitted to me last week on behalf of the joint chairmen, Dean W. Crowston of the Faculty of Administrative Studies and Vice-President W. Small. This is also an important document, with a great many proposals which provide opportunities for further administrative efficiency and organizational change. They will challenge both our determination and our objectivity.

2. The second set of influences is best illustrated by the Twelfth Quinquennial Commonwealth Universities Congress held in Vancouver last month. Bringing together representatives of 241 Commonwealth universities, it was a magnificent opportunity both to learn of our common concern and to recapture the sense of the opportunities and responsibilities of universities in the world community. As you know, I believe that participation in the international university community is not only a responsibility but an opportunity for many members of our University. It provides the means to develop new interests and to assist the infusion of new ideas into York University. In the course of that meeting, those of us who were present from York established a number of interesting contacts, had many requests to assist other universities, particularly in the Third World, and received several proposals to develop links with various institutions. Our real problem will be to establish

priorities among the competing possibilities.

3. The third set of events is one that I have been participating in for the last week, and will continue to do so throughout this week—the orientation process whereby our freshmen take the important step of entering the University. I always find this particularly exhilarating and I am greatly encouraged by the enthusiasm and obvious quality of our new entrants. Also, judging from Convocations in recent years and from orientation activities, the University is once again becoming a family place; it is particularly pleasant to find some of the parents entering into the welcoming festivities such as at the special convocation held by McLaughlin College last Saturday afternoon.

Since it is exactly 30 years ago this month since I entered university as a freshman, I have been recalling in various talks to the students during the past few days some of the comparisons and contrasts over that period of time. In particular, I would like to repeat some of my remarks at the McLaughlin Convocation last Saturday.

"I hope you will become proud of your university because there is much here to be proud of. Two weeks ago I had the privilege of representing this University at the Congress of Commonwealth Universities, which brought together nearly 1000 representatives of 241 institutions of higher learning. Just as this country acquitted itself so well two weeks earlier at the Commonwealth games, the Canadians at the Congress represented this country extremely well.

"However, I was struck by the number of people I met who knew a great deal about this University and the reputation of its faculty members and work being done here. I have noticed from time to time a tendency for members of this University to complain about its shortcomings or to engage in self-denigration. This University, not yet twenty years old, has much to be proud of and little to complain about. Resist the temptation to worry about the extent of the walk from the parking lots, the wind in the winter, the fact that the trees have not yet reached full size or maturity, and the distance from the excitement and glamour of downtown Toronto.

"In my view, everything one could want in a true university experience is available to you here. When one compares the opportunities which we enjoy with those in so many countries of the world, the Canadian balance sheet is tilted heavily to the asset side."

What then of our short term and longer term outlook? There have been, as you know, recent changes at Queen's Park, but I do not believe they will alter the immediate financial prospects of the university. If the provincial budget is not balanced by 1980-81, it will be the result of revenue decline rather than any slackening of the compulsion to reduce expenditures. However, I do not believe that any young person in this country should be or need be gloomy about the future, nor do I believe

educational institutions in general, and universities in particular, should feel that they are somehow less important than they once may have been. On the contrary, I believe that education, and universities in particular, are more important than ever before.

The enlarging importance of knowledge is the reason that I am not only optimistic about the future of education but also attach the highest priority to it. We are undergoing one of those characteristic phases in the human cycle where the arithmetics are running strong. Because of demographic circumstances, it would appear that education is in a downward phase of the cycle. In fact, education is more important than ever for two reasons: first, to provide the knowledge that will enable us to improve our economic performance in the face of diminishing resources; second, to provide us with the capacity to live a very different style of life.

An immense transformation will be required of all of us; we must be prepared for it. Consequently, we must devote serious attention in our discussions of educational philosophy to that day twenty or twenty-five years hence, when the world will look so different. Nor is that far in the future. My four-year old daughter, were she to go to university, could well be entering the world of work about the turn of the century. The educational system should be equipping her now for that type of world.

There have been serious challenges to education in the past and we overcame them. There have been critical moments in economic history and we have survived them. However, I do believe that the challenges are as severe and the required adjustments as profound as we have ever known. For that reason, we will require both time and sustained effort to make the necessary adjustments.

In our debates about educational philosophy, we face some interesting issues concerning the traditional arguments about making education "relevant" as opposed to providing education for its own sake. Do we provide education to meet the demands of the market, or to equip men and women to enjoy a wider measure

of self-fulfilment? In either case, how are the costs and benefits to be shared and distributed? We have never produced precise answers to those questions and I doubt that we shall. However, I am convinced that education and knowledge is the most significant sphere of activity today if we are not only to shape the future but to survive it.

The main task for us now is twofold:

1. to continue to seek improvement in those things we are doing, to take up new initiatives where possible, and to continue to strive for the highest standards of excellence and academic performance;

2. to ensure that we work together as a community in the full sense of the term.

On the first point, I will be discussing with you in greater detail my ideas for major attention to the 20th anniversary of this University next year. I believe that occasion will give us an opportunity to pinpoint various areas deserving of public support and assistance. In that connection, I am pleased to say that, at the June meeting of Senate, approval was given in principle to the establishment of a Centre for Canadian Studies—an objective that several of us have been pursuing vigorously for the past few years.

Our Centre for Latin American Studies will be launched during the first week of October with a major conference and a special convocation at which an honorary degree will be conferred upon Mr. Raúl Prebisch. However, as I suggest, we must ensure that we are doing everything possible to enhance our academic quality and our teaching performance, and to wrestle with what I continue to regard as the main problem facing the universities at this time - how to introduce new blood and new members of the faculty at a time of diminishing resources.

This leads to the second question which is the importance of the university recognizing the reality of its circumstances and the importance of pulling together toward a common set of objectives. We all know how restricted the university is in its flexibility. Last year we were obliged to reduce the base budget

by \$3.8 million. This involved extreme cuts in the administrative and service programmes and significant cuts in many academic areas. We cannot control the size of our grant or even the fees we charge for the services we render. Unlike a corporation, we do not have dividends to reduce in order to pay higher wages and salaries. The money budgeted for salary increases, as you know, provides for a 4% increase this year. That is not a final enrolment figure this year, all indications are that we will do well relative to the system as a whole. Our strenuous efforts in explaining the special features of this University and in appealing directly to new students, during our intensive enrolment campaign last year, have been rewarded. Again, in the orientation meetings, I have found students enthusiastic about this University. However, we have a strong competitor down the street with places to offer, and our attractiveness could change quickly unless we maintain the quality and the scope of our services.

Dissatisfaction among our faculty and staff over their economic condition could be a continuing debilitating force in an otherwise cheerful outlook and could have a major deterrent effect on the University. That is not an easy situation to correct in view of the constraints we face. I do believe, however, that members of the Board of Governors, the Government, the public, all of us together should recognize the seriousness of the problem, the inequity of not keeping pace with the cost of living, and the consequences of further reductions in numbers employed or in the general level of service if that were to become the only means of improving the salary outlook. I suggest that we must all give serious consideration to that condition.

Enrolment on Target, Budget Balanced

This past spring, when the budget for 1978-79 was being developed, enrolment estimates indicated that, providing our first-year enrolments could be sustained at the same level as 1977-78, our overall 1978-79 enrolment might be down by 2.7% compared to the previous year (i.e. 520 Fiscal Full-Time Equivalents).

As we enter the fall registration period, it would appear that our forecasts are still valid and that our new recruitment initiatives, which were launched last winter to sustain first-year enrolment, have been successful. Meanwhile, the drop foreseen in continuing students — the result of progressively smaller entering classes in the past few years—appears to be accurate.

It was also predicted that part-time evening enrolments would continue to decline. This forecast also seems valid.

Graduate Studies, for their part, were seen as holding their own this year: registrations to date support this projection.

Windfall Balances Budget

On 11th of September 1978, the Finance and Audit Committees of the Board of Governors reported their approval of the audited financial statement for the fiscal year 1977-78. The financial statement which was approved by the Board, reflected that the University's operations for the year were successfully completed

within a balanced budget. The effective cooperation of all parts of the University in responding to the 'in year' embargo of approximately \$1.2 million and receipt within the last quarter of a windfall 'one time' payment from the Ministry of (Cont. on following page)