

UNIVERSITY NEWSBEAT

Prepared and paid for by the Communications Department, S802 Ross, 667-3441

Longer-Term Planning Essential

PRESIDENT MACDONALD REPORTS TO BOARD

The following report was delivered to the Board of Governors by H. Ian Macdonald on Monday, March 12.

I would like to report this afternoon at somewhat greater length and in a more philosophical fashion. I do so because we are at a point in our discussions both for 1979-80 and for the longer run, where the possible roads ahead for York University and the type of commitment we will all require are becoming clear to a variety of members of the community.

This is particularly encouraging to those of us who have been urging for several years that longer-term planning of the University system in Ontario is essential and that the type of decisions which are a response to the vagaries of one-year financing do not serve either the University's interest or its responsibilities to the public at all well. It is always difficult to plan the best route to your destination if you are not clear where you wish to be. I trust that my optimism about the current mood of the University and its willingness to consider the full nature and consequences of academic planning is not misplaced. The fundamental academic questions facing this University are now reasonably clear. However, agreement on the answers must be preceded by a willingness to consider any proposals for improving the academic opportunities and clarifying the goals of this University.

Hiring Freeze

Two weeks ago, I announced to the Policy Committee of the University a decision which is both stark and severe: there will be no further approvals for hiring of full-time faculty members in the probationary and tenured stream for 1979-80. That follows the decision in the summer of 1977 to place a freeze on hiring which would only experience a temporary thaw under exceptional circumstances, and the provision agreed upon in Senate last spring for the Academic Policy and Planning Committee to advise the president upon such exceptions.

The reason for the current decision is both to dramatize some clear circumstances which we presently face and also to provide a few months of breathing space in which we can see whether we have both the will and the capacity to engage in longer term planning.

Academic Priorities

The discussions of academic planning so far focus on the need to establish basic priorities in our academic programs. The establishment of priorities, of course, is a two-edged sword. It implies that some things are at the top and others at the bottom. The exercise then becomes one not only of placing our programs in a vertical spectrum but also in agreeing upon which programs must be either discontinued or given less emphasis in favour of those to be fortified.

Earlier in this meeting, you heard from the Dean of the Faculty of Education who provided a clear example of the difficult dilemmas we face. On the one hand, this Faculty could be discontinued with relatively little difficulty which would appear appropriate in the

light of the future overall market for teachers. On the other hand, the quality, distinctiveness, and accomplishments of that Faculty along with the continuing high demand for student places in it would suggest that it merits our continuing support and encouragement.

Base Budget Cut

In our current budget-making, we are all too aware of the problem of priorities. The base budget of the University was reduced by some 3.8 million dollars in 1977-79, with the current possibility that a further 2.1 million will be removed in 1979-80. In that process, it has been necessary to deal harshly with so-called non-academic programs and support services. In particular, I suspect that, next year, we will become accustomed to complaints about the deficiencies in our telephone service and the chilliness of our buildings in winter to add to our concerns about brown lawns in summer and buildings of deteriorating fabric. At the same time, I have letters before me expressing concern about the inadequate level of security and about the diminishing resources for computing services to support academic programs, as well as a letter from the Senate Committee on Research pointing out that hospitality for visiting scholars, travel funds for learned gatherings, and administrative support for research are all of the essence in maintaining a first-class University.

York in five years

When we come to setting priorities for the longer run, we will no longer be able to escape some firm decisions about the criteria which are to govern that priority-setting. Are we to be guided by tax rates, i.e., the relationship between revenue earned by a Faculty and its level of expenditures? Are we to devote a greater share of our funds to areas of academic growth and to impose larger budgetary reductions on those with static or declining numbers of students? Is the faculty-student ratio or some other measure of workload to be employed much more rigorously in determining our future budgetary allocations? These are the questions to which both the APCC and the Policy Committee will be turning their immediate attention with a view to tackling the question: "What will or should York University look like five years from now?"

In one sense, we could simply say it will look very much as it is now, but at a reduced scale, with our existing ten Faculties and with our existing faculty members, less those who have retired or left for other reasons. Alternatively, it is within our own hands to decide that the University could look very different.

Startling Predictions

We do begin with some rather startling predictions. If nothing else were to change and if current demographic enrolment projections were proven correct, then our enrolment would decline by 25 per

cent over the next five years, whereas the numbers of faculty reaching retirement age and the expected level of attrition would be on the order of 6 per cent. Of course, retirements and resignations will be a highly random nature, with no necessary relationship to the pattern of enrolment among faculties and departments.

Our greatest practical problem in academic planning is to match specific resources to needs in the face of built-in inflexibility. Even assuming that the present funding mechanisms continue, resulting in a 15 per cent decline in funding, the gap between that figure and our level of faculty reduction is large indeed. On the brighter side, I suppose it can be said that the quality of service to students would certainly not diminish if the student numbers do decline so much more radically than the faculty resources.

New Constituencies

In the face of such possibilities, the place to begin is to ask certain questions about growth. Need the enrolment forecast be fulfilled? Does it not devote undue attention to the post-Grade 13 group and not nearly enough attention to the need for adaptive and continuing education throughout a lifetime and career? Is it not reasonable to seek out new constituencies for university education and indeed to take education to the work place as well as bring students to the University?

Those of you who may have read the York Gazette recently on our new initiatives at the General Motors Plant in Oshawa will have a good idea of the prospects for such initiatives. Incidentally, as I expressed to the Search Committee for the new Dean of Atkinson College this morning, this explains why, in my view, we need a fresh new look at the future of Atkinson College, and why the new Dean must be prepared to take Atkinson to the community as never before.

Accessibility

At the same time, we need some serious discussion not only in this University but in the Province generally about the meaning of accessibility. In the first place, are we making university a realistic prospect for a large enough proportion of our population? I, for one, believe that we are not, and that we still fall far short of true equality of educational opportunity in this Province, and not simply for economic reasons.

This question, of course, relates in turn to the issue of the numbers who should go to university and the standards to apply. I believe that there cannot be too many students in university, notwithstanding the pessimistic short-term job outlook. Indeed, it seems to me that the type of adaptability and flexibility required over the next twenty-five years as we move into the so-called conservator society will place a premium both on education and on knowledge as never before. Moreover, it has been proven so often that university can open up a new world to many whose academic motivation was limited in the past. In addition, there are

those who for cultural or language reasons have had handicaps to overcome from the past.

In my opinion, we should be lenient at the stage of admission in order to provide serious candidates with the opportunity to test themselves in university, and very tough in our academic standards once students are admitted. However, that is a basic question which must be addressed in the planning process on which we embark for the future.

Personnel Policies

Meanwhile, it is the view of the members of every university body in the Province with whom I have discussed the matter that we will have an abundance of Faculty members over the next few years. This means that serious attention must be given in our personnel policies to early retirement opportunities, to exchanges with other sectors of society, and to the enhancement of our international opportunities. These are all matters that this University is actively assessing and exploring.

Buried within this problem, in addition, is perhaps the most serious issue faced by the universities: the difficulty of making provision for new young members of the academic community and for the new blood which is the basic ingredient of the academic life. I believe we must pay serious attention to means of providing some opportunities for new academic members of our community even in these difficult times.

Unfortunately, one group in our community has borne the burden of reductions disproportionately — contractually limited faculty and various types of part-time teachers. Some of our most gifted instructors have been lost in the process, along with the variety of background often brought by them to the University, simply because they lacked job security and because those jobs were most easily discontinued or not renewed.

External Campaign

That leads me to look at the external environment. Spokesmen for this University have been active throughout in pressing the University's case upon Government and the public, and in urging that all of us should do so. In our annual briefs to the Ontario Council on University Affairs, we have pointed to the serious consequences of governmental under-funding of universities.

In discussions at the Council of Ontario Universities, we have stressed the importance of ensuring that every means is found to impress upon both the public and elected members of the Legislature and Parliament the serious plight of the universities. As recently as last Friday afternoon, my fellow members of the Executive of COU had no difficulty in agreeing upon a common strategy with the Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations (OCUFA) for dealing with the public, the media, and elected representatives.

I have never taken the view that these years would be easy for the universities. However, in the first public speech I gave four months

before joining the university, I suggested that, notwithstanding the really difficult task ahead, universities were so essential to the solution of the whole catalogue of problems that afflict the society of today, it was a task supremely worth working at, and I could think of no higher calling at this stage in our history. I continue to believe that the game ahead will be rough, but that the goals are supreme.

Government Funding Inadequate

It has been clear for some time that governmental funding is inadequate in meeting the universities' overall needs. Ontario universities have been funded at less than the rate of inflation for the past eight or nine years with the result that this Province has dropped near the bottom among the ten Provinces of Canada for per capita public support of universities.

As I have suggested so often in the past we can never relent in our campaign to impress upon the public, and through them, upon the Government of Ontario, that the under-funding of the universities can well be fatal qualitatively to the magnificent system of higher educational opportunity that was created in this Province in the 1960's. At the very least, it is essential that the funding of universities should be related to their legitimate costs of operation rather than to the numbers of students enrolled, and that our budgets be underwritten at least to the rate of inflation for those legitimate costs.

Private Funds

While this campaign continues, it is essential that we do everything possible to enhance our private financial resources. The first activity in which I was involved, when I became President in July, 1974, was to present to the Board of Governors a plan for raising private funds.

I suspect that not enough is known in the University about the effort and the returns which those efforts have brought to this community. For example, I was surprised to read in Excalibur that the University should not have waited until now to launch a financial campaign. That suggested to me that we have not made clear enough that the current plans for fund-raising are an extension, elaboration, and intensification of what has been going on for the past few years.

In addition to the York Founders Fund which raised some fifteen million dollars in the early years of the University, our efforts since the summer of 1974 have brought us \$5,058,273 without which many of the new initiatives and current programs could never have been undertaken. I am pleased to announce the most recent donation to the University — \$250,000 from the Leonard Wolinsky Foundation to initiate the Annual Leonard Wolinsky Lectures in Judaic Studies and the new Leonard Wolinsky Scholarships in Judaic Studies.

On top of this, \$4,262,000 has been provided by public and private sources to build the Metropolitan Track and Field complex at York

(continued p. 11)