

opinion

A proposal for the perfect university

By F.K. Donnelly

Reprinted from the CAUT Bulletin

Now that the federal government is reviewing the system of finance in post-secondary education, this may be an opportune time to reconsider our concept of the university.

We should be prepared to man the ramparts in the defence of those aspects of the university which are absolutely essential to its purpose and to jettison those that are not. My thoughts on this subject have not emerged by way of any great flash of insight. Rather the process of enlightenment has been a slow one which meets all the criteria of scientific objectivity.

The first aspect of the Canadian university that we might re-examine is the grounds.

Are the tree-lined avenues, patches of green, ornamental gardens and odd bits of semi-aesthetic sculpture really necessary?

Does the progress of Western civilization really rest upon the absence of any acoustic qualities at Carleton's imitation Greek amphitheatre or the life span of McGill's ginkgo tree? No! Let's scrap it all and sell the real estate. The profits realized from the sale of the downtown grounds of some of our universities could carry us through the forthcoming financial crisis.

In addition, no grounds means no groundskeepers and further huge savings. The old Sir George Williams campus in Montreal didn't have any grounds and yet it was more than able to carry on with its educational obligations.

Let's go further and get rid of the buildings and the fixed campus site as well. No buildings means no

maintenance staff, no multi-storey parking facilities, no time-consuming drive to work and no faculty club.

The University of Alberta could fire its little army of parking lot attendants, demolish their H.Q. bunker and disconnect their computer monitoring device. Think of the energy savings involved in not having any buildings.

Perhaps a massive federal government conversion grant might be obtained for a 100 percent reduction in energy consumption. University libraries and librarians could be dispensed with as well. Existing collections could be donated to the National Library in Ottawa and borrowed back by scholars on the inter-library loan service.

I would also get rid of photocopy machines, laboratories, secretaries and computers. Any scholar in need of such things would have to contract them on a per-

sonal basis.

Convocation, that is the time when we dress up and try to find a faculty member who can still recite in Latin, is really just an expensive public relations gimmick that we could well do without.

Oh yes, I almost forgot, we could also solve the student unemployment problem by dropping the 80 out of 100 undergraduates who are not capable of gaining the full benefit of a university education. This in turn would eliminate the need for expensive residence facilities and their associated staffs.

All of these costly yet non-essential things would have to go. I would keep only one thing at the perfect university -scholars. They would simply receive a portion of the university budget to carry out their research and to supervise a few students.

There would be one common salary, say \$50,000, along with a generous no-questions-asked expense allowance, and no academic ranks. This would eliminate all that useless, time-wasting committee work drivel about such matters, as well as inter-faculty jealousy over salaries and promotions.

There would also be no payroll deduction schemes, no faculty association, no collective agreement, no committees, and absolutely no need

for an ever increasing plague of administrators. This would also obviate the need for faculty members to interminably complain to each other about their problems with the administration.

There would be no administration and these Jobian litanies could be converted into a symphony of intellectual endeavours.

This proposal has much in it that would be attractive to both politicians and taxpayers. In spite of the flashy salaries, it would be a cheaper institution to operate than a conventional university. It would also provide the opportunity for academics and a small number of students to engage in useful intellectual activities. Every true scholar should be enthusiastic about this scheme.

There is only one possible flaw in this proposal which might prevent its universal implementation. It may be that once the bureaucratic, financial, ceremonial and environmental problems of the universities are solved, some faculty members would find that they did not know how to spend their time.

This would be very serious indeed, but I suggest that it is only the remotest of possibilities.

Professor Donnelly is with the Division of Humanities and Languages at UNB.

Congratulations Tingley and Colpitts

Nancy Tingley and Brenda Colpitts, Co-Editors 1981 Up The Hill Yearbook

Dear Nancy and Brenda:

I have been advised by the publishers of the "1981 Up The Hill Yearbook" that you and your staff members have been awarded a Yearbook Efficiency Award for outstanding achievement in the planning, preparation and punctual completion of photographic and editorial material.

As I am sure you know this is a very difficult and therefore a very coveted award to receive. I would like to express the thanks and appreciation of the entire student body to you as Co-Editors of this book as well as to all the other people who worked very hard to make this award possible.

Yours truly,

Kevin Ratcliff
President

Caribbean congrats

Dear Sir:

The Caribbean Circle of UNB is pleased to extend warm congratulations to the government and people of Belize S.A. on its independence from colonial British rule. We trust that the birth of this new nation would be one of continued success in productive development and improved social life as a member of the Caribbean community.

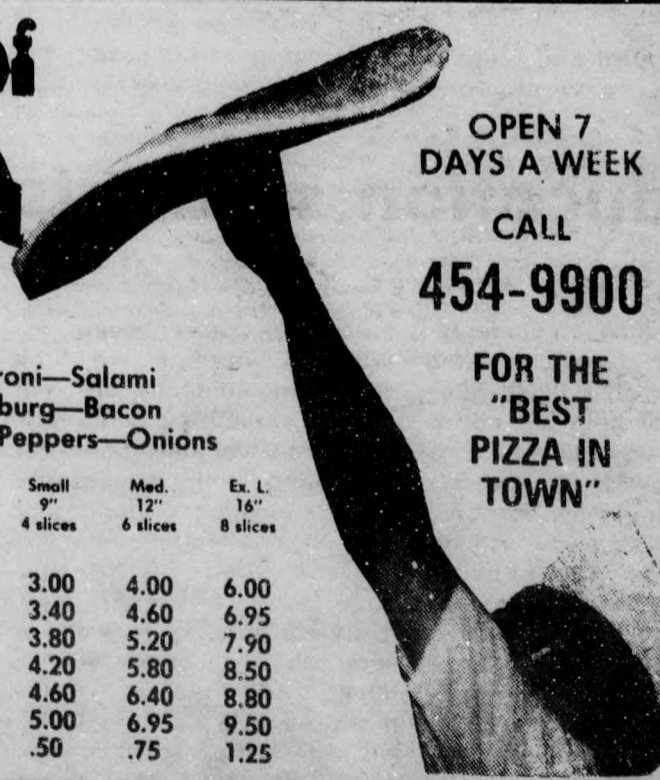
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