

A Time To Look Back, And To Move On

By CONNIE CULLEN

Spring of 1965 began a tense era locally, for it marked the release of the Royal Commission's report and recommendations about higher education on P.E.I. Briefly, it suggested that a University of Prince Edward Island be formed, combining Prince of Wales College and St. Dunstan's University; and that, towards this end, P.W.C. should develop a four year university program — enabling the college to enter any union on an equal footing with St. Dunstan's.

REACTION!

In view of the vigorous and often bitter conflict that would later arise, the initial reaction seems almost passive. For the most part, the man on the street greeted the news calmly; pleased to think that his Island could develop, in UPEI, educational facilities to rival those of the mainland; he delighted in the logic of combining those two historic institutions (which had served so well individually) to give young people "the best of both worlds"; he praised what seemed to be an economical move by the government; and he never dreamed that the commission's ideas would not seem so acceptable to everyone.

Well, they didn't . . . and the rumblings of discontent were soon heard — Alumni of both St. Dunstan's and Prince of Wales became uneasy over a move that they felt threatened the "identity" and "personality" of their alma maters.

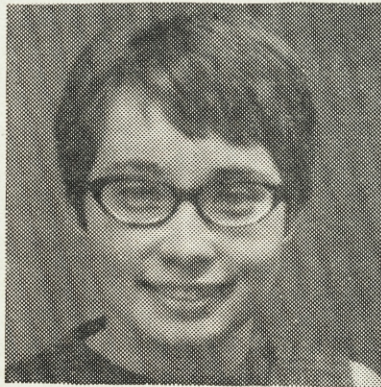
Various religious groups feared that a union would interfere with the spiritual atmosphere of both colleges.

And there were those who declared it could never and

would never happen.

That was the general public — Then came the reactions that everyone awaited, words that would make or break UPEI — the official opinions of both S.D.U. and P.W.C.

St. Dunstan's was brief and to the point. It welcomed the commission's decision and looked forward to discussing plans for a federation—which would result in a UPEI made up of SDU and PWC, each maintaining its identity.



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Prince of Wales was equally to the point: it would happily develop a four year program, as suggested. However, it would prefer not to enter any sort of union, but rather to expand its own facilities and form a U of PWC.

When the first surprise wore off, people began dividing into camps. There were those at both schools who stood solidly for separatism. Many old Welshmen rallied around the college. A cheering section gathered behind SDU and UPEI.

Amid all the controversy, student reaction was inevitable—its kind, almost predictable.

STUDENTS TAKE SIDES

St. Dunstan's students came out noisily in favor of UPEI. Naturally, support was not unanimous—there were many who wanted to preserve a separate identity. But for the most part, they argued that the Island only needed one university and could only sup-

port one: that UPEI could become a first-rate institution, attracting better teachers and students than two smaller schools.

At Prince of Wales, the reaction was mixed and subdued. Some students were immediately enthusiastic about separatism — others were flatly against it. Many students, if asked, would have replied: "Well, personally I'm not against UPEI, but..." And that formed the keynote of the student's remarks — while he might privately prefer union, it seemed obvious that union was not going to be effected. His college was expanding and his only initial support was passivity.

FORCES CLASH

In many ways, the situation came to a head during the last school year.

P.W.C. revealed dazzling plans for expansion—impressive new profs were hired for 1967-68; the four year program was put on the road to development; blue prints for new buildings were drawn up; and "town and gown" became a college password.

To the general public, these elaborate plans symbolized a death knell for UPEI. They were greeted with despair and incredulity by these citizens who still felt that a single university was the most prudent plan.

Officially, St. Dunstan's attitude did not change. On the student level, the matter seemed more urgent. Why, if PWC were to continue its ambitious program, UPEI might

never be! A crusading spirit took hold of the campus, and UPEI became a "Cause".

Meanwhile, at Prince of Wales, student reaction was strangely quiet. Caught up in a bewildering flurry of plans, the student could not help but be impressed and proud. Though many still quietly favored UPEI, official student reactions (expressed through their council and newspaper), and indeed ALL loudly spoken opinions, were favorable.

By late December, PWC students were beginning to feel under fire from St. Dunstan's. And from that time on, things went from bad to worse. A series of unfortunate incidents made relations deteriorate to a point nearing hostility.

St. Dunstan's announced plans for new buildings on campus. PWC stood firm in its intentions.

It was almost as though the Royal Commission had never been.

But one thing was changed. Two years ago, there was a friendly rivalry between the schools. They remained aloof and independent. Now, they were together more and liking it less. Agitation and resentment made "friendly rivalry" approach bitter enmity.

THIS YEAR'S MOOD

At the start of a new year, it is natural to take stock of the past and make resolutions for the future.

After a month back in university, perhaps an evalua-

tion is in order. Moods and tempers at both PWC and SDU have cooled somewhat. Feelings have unfortunately settled into a rut of mutual distrust.

St. Dunstan's students still vigorously support UPEI, and at Prince of Wales, the great changes in the college this year have succeeded in arousing student support and enthusiasm.

A committee is presently studying ways of co-operation between the two universities. By the way, physical development on both campuses does not necessarily exclude all possibilities of federation — If and when such union is desired by both parties, it can be effected. Duplication of facilities would likely be required in any case to accommodate an increased student enrolment.

AND NOW?

Official co-operation will be meaningless if there is hostility and distrust on the student level. If UPEI is to develop, the founding bodies should be in accord. If it is never to be, then Charlottetown is too small to contain 1600 feuding students. In either event, co-operation and goodwill are important.

All sort of cliches from "Many hands make light work" to "Two heads are better than one" espouse teamwork. Believe it or not, P.W.C. and S.D.U. have a lot to offer one another.

Perhaps . . . perhaps, we could stand a little more warmth. After all, two miles isn't so very far, is it?

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