

UPEI'S PRESIDENT MEINCKE

"Inaugural Address"
Delivered by Peter
Meincke on his install-
ation as 2nd President
and Vice-Chancellor of
the University of Prince
Edward Island Saturday,
23 September, 1978

As we go through this ceremony, I am deeply conscious that the history of this University did not begin only nine short years ago. Its existence is firmly rooted in two very fine institutions, St. Dunstan's University, which formally opened here on this ground in 1855, and Prince of Wales College, which was established by Royal Charter as the Central Academy in 1834. I am very pleased that later today these links with the past will be even more firmly established when the alumni present the class photographs which many of you saw on display in the Library last night.

I am also very much aware of the extraordinary contribution that my predecessor, Ron Baker, has made in bringing UPEI to where it is today. Many of my colleagues at other universities have told me of the very high regard they have for this institution and for the Province of Prince Edward Island. Another indication of how well this University is doing is the high quality of the faculty that have chosen to teach at this University.

One of the best measures of success of an institution is how its graduates perform. I would like to share with you some of the things that I have learned so far. Last year, of all the students in Canada who tried the uniform final exam for their C.A., only a little over 50% passed. I think it is quite significant that 100% of the students from

UPEI who tried the exams for the first time succeeded in passing. We are also very proud of Cathy Leeco who graduated last year at the age of 18 and had a number of outstanding scholarships offered to her. She chose a graduate Award at Princeton and is now enrolled in a Ph.D. programme to study the Sociology of Law. The son of our new chairman, Martin Grant, won a coveted NRC Fellowship and is studying at the University of Toronto. A number of students who have been pursuing graduate studies have reported back that they have found themselves as well prepared to tackle the graduate work as students from other universities.

So it is my assessment, as a newcomer to the University and to the Island, that the University community should feel a real sense of accomplishment, and the Province of which it is a part has good reason to be proud of this institution and the place that it is earning for itself in the world of learning.

I have sensed in this University a growing feeling that it has successfully emerged from a long and sometimes difficult period of adjustment and, now, it is prepared to look outward and to the future. What does that future hold? A number of recent talks and conferences have been devoted to the theme "The Universities in a Changing Environment". Part of the changing environment is the projected decline in the population in the 18 to 20-year-old age group. Another change which has been adversely affecting universities for some time is the continuing and growing financial restraint imposed by govern-

ments.

But I would suggest to you that there are even more fundamental changes occurring in society today, that we are not just experiencing a downswing in the normal type of business cycle but rather that we are poised on the threshold of a new era in man's evolution.

In discussing the dilemmas that face us, Harman of the Stanford Research Institute points out that "While many of the social problems associated with these dilemmas are tractable if taken singly, they cannot be solved collectively in the present paradigm precisely because their origins lie in the fabulous success of that paradigm."

I believe that, as the nature of this new paradigm becomes clearer, scale or size will emerge as fundamental parameter. There are many forces which have operated to increase the size and complexity of the structures of our society, and a McLuhanesque Global Village is still seen by many as the ultimate goal. But there is a growing sense of awareness that bigger is not always better, that perhaps we need to develop

to Alex Campbell for his very far-sighted leadership in this area. He is no doubt largely responsible for the fact that Prince Edward Island is being looked to from many corners of the Globe.

What then is the role of universities in this changing environment and, in particular, what is the role of this University? The debate about the role of universities has gone on throughout the ages. Even Aristotle asked, "Should the useful in life or should virtue or should the higher knowledge be the aim of the spectrum of opinion when he stated that "useful knowledge" was a "deal of trash". My own view is that the answer lies somewhere in between, that a delicate balance must be struck and that adjustments must constantly be made in response to the context of the times. I very much like Flexner's statement that the university is "an expression of the age as well as an influence operating upon both the present and the future."

Perhaps I am too influenced by my training as a physicist, but I think there are parallels between this kind of question and the kind of duality



structures and technologies that are more human in scale.

I became so fascinated with this question that I spent my sabbatical year studying the problems of scale in a number of areas and a number of countries. I came to the conclusion that Prince Edward Island is rapidly emerging as a world leader in this area, and I know that this view is shared by a number of people not only in Canada but throughout the world. If I may, Mr. Chancellor, I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute

that one finds in nature. The fundamental particles of nature are known to act sometimes like particles and sometimes like waves.

So it is with the university. When it is examined in one way it appears to be far too isolated in its ivory tower. When it is examined in another, it appears to be far too utilitarian, too tightly coupled into society for its own good. The point is that a balance must be maintained so that it does not appear to be one way or the other at all times.

