

1973

Our 30th Anniversary!

2003

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

As we start a new academic year, I wish to welcome to our ranks those of our readers who are newly-appointed members of New Brunswick faculty. I wish them every success.

New members or those who have arrived from universities in other provinces will, no doubt, be interested in the retrospective of the Federation's recent public relations activities which appears elsewhere in this issue. [See page 3 - Ed.]

Since the last issue of the **Bulletin** was published, we have been successful in having two more articles published in the daily print media: "**Universities Merit More**" in the June 11 issue of the Times & Transcript, and "**Society Must Rein In Education Costs**" [see page 6 - Ed.] in the September 2 issue of the Telegraph Journal. We are continuing in our endeavours to obtain more coverage of post-secondary education in the francophone media, particularly in l'Acadie Nouvelle, and hope to be able to report favourably on this endeavour in the next **Bulletin**.

On September 21 the Executive Director, Desmond Morley, attended an invitation-only symposium convened by the Maritimes Provinces Higher Education Commission to discuss the Commission's future priorities. It was the virtually unchallenged conclusion that the reduction or elimination of tuition fees, and their replacement with adequate public funding, was the issue of the most pressing urgency.

The Federation has again been invited to present a brief to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance, and has been successful in being included in the list of participants at the Hearings to be held in Fredericton on November 3rd next.

To all of our members, I wish a productive and rewarding academic year.

Claude Dionne
President

STATUS OF WOMEN ESSAY PRIZES

The Status of Women Essay prizes, each valued at \$250.00, were awarded this year to Corinne Gilroy for her examination of the depiction of women in the Gothic novels of the 18th Century, and to Katia Grubišić for her comparative analysis of the poetry of Emily Dickinson and Ralph Waldo Emerson.

There was a record number of entries in this year's competition, and both recipients are to be warmly congratulated on their success.

COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE RETROSPECTIVE

The Communications Committee formally came into existence at the Fall, 2000 Board meeting of the Federation. Its mandate was to make the Federation more visible to both its own members and the general public.

The Executive Director and I sat down soon afterwards and, with some trepidation, tried to figure out how we would accomplish such a monumental task. Nevertheless, as we enter the fourth year of the Committee's existence, I think that great strides have been made.

One of the first tasks we set ourselves was to try to establish a rapport with the Opinion Editors of the major newspapers in the province to see if we could get regular exposure in one or more of them. We realized that this may be the best way to accomplish our goals. The downside to this plan was the possibility of "squandering our capital" with the newspapers, and that the end result may be their eventually refusing to publish our articles because we were looking for too much coverage. The editors said that they would be interested in our articles – however, they did not wish to commit to regular publication but would assess each on its own merits. As you can see from the article entitled "**We Love Letters – And We Love Hearing New Voices, Too**" by the Managing Editor of the Telegraph Journal reprinted elsewhere in this Bulletin [see page 4 – Ed.] success in being published requires a delicate balance of ingredients. I am pleased to report, therefore, that over the last three years the Federation has had 30 articles published in the various New Brunswick print media. We will try to continue to foster good relations with them.

The second major task we set ourselves was to develop and advertise a Federation web site. The purpose of the web site was twofold: 1) to increase the visibility of the Federation to our members; and 2) to act as a second lobbying vehicle. Those members of the general public who visit the web site are effectively being lobbied while reading our articles, Bulletins and briefs. Once the website was established we tried to advertise its existence. To this end we took out ads in the local newspapers and Christmas greetings on the local television channels. We printed the web site address on a series of bookmarks which we had distributed by bookstores around the province, and continued to advertise it in the Bulletin. During the first year of the web site I reported how pleased the Committee was that we had surpassed 2,000 hits a month, and that we would try to maintain (through our advertising efforts) a similar hit rate. As you are most likely aware, I reported last month that the monthly hit rate had recently surpassed **60,000 hits per month!**

The Communications Committee also wished to raise the Federation's profile by periodically undertaking public awareness campaigns. To date we have launched:

The Book Mark Campaign: Bookmarks designed by the Committee were distributed to all members of the Federation, all MLA's, New Brunswick MP's, and the public by distribution through bookstores throughout New Brunswick. The response has been so encouraging that we have continued to distribute the bookmarks through the bookstores each year as an ongoing public-awareness project.

The Portfolios Campaign: Due to our success in the print media we decided to produce a yearly portfolio containing all the articles we have had published during that year. The portfolio is distributed to local associations, MLA's, New Brunswick MP's, MPHEC, Home and School associations, CAUT, and other provincial associations.

The Pamphlet Campaign: A pamphlet is periodically produced which deals with known facts about the current state of post-secondary education in New Brunswick. This pamphlet is sent out to all Federation Members, MLA's, New Brunswick MP's, the MPHEC, CAUT, other provincial associations; and the information therein is conveyed to the general public through our weekly advertisements in both the French and English provincial newspapers.

The Anniversary Campaign: A sticker was produced announcing that the Federation was celebrating its 30th anniversary. The sticker has been placed on every document which has left the Federation office in 2003.

The Committee is also discussing other possible campaigns for the coming years. As you can see, the Communications Committee has come a long way since its inception in 2000, and looks forward to continued success in the future.

Special thanks to Desmond Morley, Executive Director, and to Jack Vanderlinde, Past-President, for their help in establishing the Communications Committee as a going concern.

Ian H. Fraser, Chair.

WE LOVE LETTERS – AND WE LOVE HEARING NEW VOICES, TOO

[The following article by Peter Haggert appeared in the Saturday, May 17, 2003 issue of the Telegraph Journal]

Editorial page editor Ron Barry is in a good mood as he settles into his desk at 8 a.m. on a Monday morning. "See that... we published nine letters today."

It's a victory for Ron, whose driving motivation on many days is to get as many different voices onto the editorial pages as possible.

It's now 9:30 a.m. and the morning mail's been distributed. Ron's mood is now tempered as 11 new letters come to his desk. "It's hard to keep up, but it's a great problem to have," says Mr. Barry, a Saint John native and a lifelong New Brunswicker.

I can feel for Ron. Simply put, we love getting letters. And we've been rewarded in recent years with an exponential growth in the number of letters we receive – not only in number but in diversity of topic. New Names. New methods of delivery. New views to add to the mix of opinion in this water-cooler province.

The number of letters received speak to the health of the dialogue created by the newspaper in the market it serves. Readers tell us time and time again in marketing surveys that letters are near the top of the list of what they like in their newspaper.

Here's what they like about letters:

- ⊙ **New Voices And Opinions:** Readers like well-formed arguments. They especially like learning new facts and ideas from the letters page. And to see new names contributing to the page is great. Readers tell us they turn off if they see the same names providing the same scope of information time and time again.
- ⊙ **Good Taste:** While they like a good argument, they don't like an attack. Letters written with respect are perceived by readers to be more credible.
- ⊙ **Length:** Long letters lose readers quite quickly. In fact, the length of a letter sometimes stops a person at the headline atop the letter. Reading a letter is an investment in time and we all use our time most prudently. We encourage letters to be no longer than 450 words. This helps keep writers to be more succinct with their position and provides a reasonable top end length for the reader. With this word limit, it allows us to provide more opinions, more voices and more of your contributions to our pages.
- ⊙ **Timeliness:** We try to get letters in the newspaper as soon as possible after they are received. Of course, we always have a number of unprinted letters waiting for space. Sometimes that number is larger than other times. This certainly affects the timeliness of getting a letter in the newspaper.
- ⊙ **New Discussion:** We prefer letters that provide new information. We prefer letters that contribute new arguments and new ideas. If it's a choice between printing a letter that rehashes an old or oft-stated position, and another that provides fresh food for thought, you'll always see the fresh letter in print.
- ⊙ **Frequency:** Given the number of letters we receive, we need to restrict the amount of times an individual gets published. While we appreciate those who provide letters constantly, we are also aware that the reader has a saturation point for reading any one writer. And those are tough decisions we have to make. Ideally, we'd like to see someone in print no more than once per month.
- ⊙ **Libel:** A letter which can lead to the reputation of another being hurt could be subject to a legal, libel action. And while the letter writer could be in hot water, so too the newspaper. We're not going to print a letter which we feel could be libelous. That's not to say we won't exercise the voice of the reader. It's not uncommon to run a letter by our lawyer before printing, as a security for both the writer and the newspaper.
- ⊙ **Campaigns:** There are some issues that spawn obvious campaigns by folks with an agenda. As best we can, when we identify what seems to be a campaign, we won't subject our readers to the phoney nature of them.
- ⊙ **Consumer Complaints:** We don't have the ability to verify the kind of he said/she said discussion which goes on in a consumer complaint. Therefore, we won't print letters of consumer complaint.
- ⊙ **Tough Topics:** There are those who believe our ownership interferes with the kind of letters which appear on this page. That's absolute bunk. A well-written, verifiable and accurate letter meeting the standards above will find a home. Letters drenched with vindication for past disputes or constantly hammer home perhaps a personal agenda, won't.

- ⊙ **Elections:** Election season is prime time to receive campaign letters. Let it be known now, we don't print 'em. End of story. There are enough public forums and other venues to advertise a political platform. We'll leave the letters page for other dialogue.

Letters to the editor are one of the best read features of the newspaper. Thanks for bringing success to our letters page.

Peter Haggert is Managing Editor of the Telegraph-Journal.

SOCIETY MUST REIN IN EDUCATION COSTS

[Published in the Telegraph Journal September 2, 2003]

The "Guest Column" is a regular feature on the editorial page. Today's contributor is Desmond Morley, Executive Director of the Federation of New Brunswick Faculty Associations

This week, despite tuition fee increases averaging more than seven per cent over last year, 23,000 students will enrol in New Brunswick's four universities to either commence or continue their studies.

Having seen a slight downward trend in the late 1990's, enrolments rose again in the first two years of the new Millennium, even though the size of the 18-24 year-old age cohort continued to decline. No doubt this recent reversal of the downward trend has resulted from a compensating increase in the "participation rate" – the percentage of eligible individuals actually enrolling. (Reportedly, the University of New Brunswick alone is expecting a 30 per cent increase in first-year enrolments this Fall.)

According to Human Resources Development Canada, in 2002 a total of 97 per cent of the university graduates in the New Brunswick labour force were employed – 87 per cent of them full time.

In the last decade, the number of university graduates employed in this province has risen from slightly more than 40,000 to nearly 58,000. Granted, the overall size of the labour force has expanded during that time, but not by the 45 per cent or so which would have been required for it to absorb a similar increase in university graduates without a corresponding increase in its demand for academic qualifications.

In fact, the number of employed university graduates has grown, and will continue to grow, regardless of fluctuations in the size of the labour force. For example: as they retire, nurses in New Brunswick who did not obtain Bachelor of Nursing degrees will only be replaced by individuals who have done so.

As society clamours for more and better educational credentials, the proportion of university graduates in the workforce can only continue to grow; and soon there may be a bigger demand for

them than there is a supply. Reportedly, in the United States last year there were a million challenging, well-paid jobs which were not filled because qualified personnel could not be found.

Consequently, former New Brunswick premier Senator Louis J. Robichaud had good reason to suggest recently that the federal and provincial governments should put their heads together to offer free university tuition.

Senator Robichaud observed that, at present, only students with means can participate in higher education, and that many students with the potential to succeed cannot afford the cost.

He is right.

Owing to the relatively easy availability of loan financing, a university education is accessible to just about everyone with the academic capability to be admitted. Accessible, however, does not mean affordable. As provincial Liberal education critic and respected former student leader Kelly Lamrock, MLA (Fredericton-Nashwaak) points out, university students who graduate with debt loads of the order of \$40,000 are not uncommon. He compares this with starting our working lives with a \$40,000 mortgage before we even have a full-time job.

In the last few days, Conservative MP John Herron (Fundy-Royal), New Brunswick's seemingly indefatigable federal advocate for the proper funding of post-secondary education, has unveiled a policy paper which, generally speaking, proposes meaningful increases in core funding for post-secondary education, improved student financial aid, and student debt load reduction strategies.

For a long time, the university community has acknowledged the reality that education is a lifelong continuum which does not come to a shuddering halt at the end of the high-school years; and that, in its formal stages, its delivery at an affordable cost – and preferably at no cost at all – should be a priority of governments at all levels.

It is rewarding, therefore, that some of our politicians - from different generations, political persuasions, and levels of government - now appear to have arrived at the same conclusion.

COMMEMORATIVE “STICKER”

Throughout 2003, the Federation has been attaching a commemorative 30th anniversary “sticker” to all outgoing correspondence, and we have received numerous congratulatory comments.

We are now down to the last few “stickers”, and these will be reserved for use on letters going outside the Federation until the end of the year.

Ian Fraser
Chair
Communications Committee

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