

Preamble & Motion – Alumni AGM 2012 Peter Flemington ‘58

It's my feeling that the issue regarding the "Memorial Library" and its handling created an atmosphere of division and mistrust among those who, ideally, should have been bound together by a shared experience – that of spending some of the most rewarding and enriching years of our lives at this place.

Whether the issue or the process has been subject to any second thoughts, any regrets -- I have no way of knowing. Only those within the Administration, the Regents, the Alumni Board or those who may have naming rights on the new building, could say.

Though the matter is past, in the physical sense, I think we could and should take the time to learn whatever lessons are in it for us as Alumni, and to set about on a path that will bring an end to the mistrust, rancor and name-calling that has characterized relations between the University's power structure and a very significant number of Alumni who have, over the past while, been less than thrilled to admit that status.

I believe the situation requires (by whatever name) a Task Force which will reach beyond reconciliation to reflection and possible action on a number of fronts. Among other matters it may wish to explore, the following questions may be relevant:

It will first need to define just what it is to be an "alumnus" or "alumna". What role do we have -- or are we seen to have -- within the University community? We are donors and class members, yes. We are also representatives of the University in the world. Are we there purely for promotional purposes, or are we seen as having hearts and minds which can contribute both continuity and worldly wisdom to its well-being?

Is it the job of the Alumni Board to ascertain and reflect the needs and wishes and input of Alumni? Do the Office and/or the Board exercise any independence of thought? Or express any curiosity regarding the feelings and priorities of the alumni they were thought to represent?

Do existing communication structures and vehicles nourish dialogue between Allisonians in Sackville and Alumni in the wider world? Does the *Record* allow for a vigorous exchange of Letters to the Editor on matters of moment? Is it possible that Advancement has lost the trust of some through a feeling of being managed, rather than encouraged to be concerned, to participate, to be 'at the table'? Is Communication on track, is it transparent and trust-making? Should the Alumni structures be paid for by Alumni, rather than from the budget of the University? Are there steps that can be made to improve our situation and promote healing at this difficult time?

I hope such questions are helpful in indicating the scope of work that I believe lies ahead. Alumni matters can't be considered in a vacuum and, as we all know there are a number of governance issues that must be explored relating to the Administration and the Board of Regents and their operations.

I feel that much clearly needs to be done, and time is of the essence. I would **Move** that:

The Alumni Board constitute a Task Force comprised of 10 or fewer suitable, concerned Alumni and Friends who will research, discuss, report and make recommendations to the Board regarding the relationship between (1) the Alumni and the Alumni Board and (2) the Alumni Board and the Administration. The report of the Task Force would be made available to all Allisonians.