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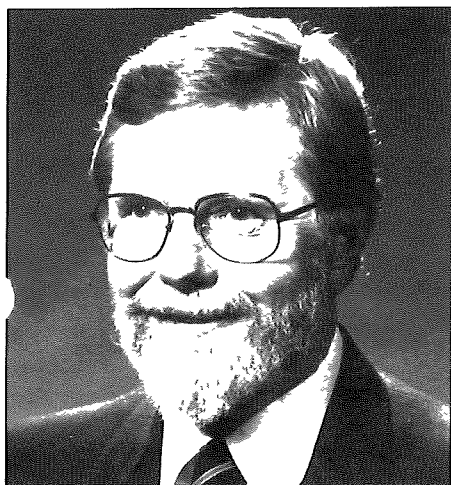


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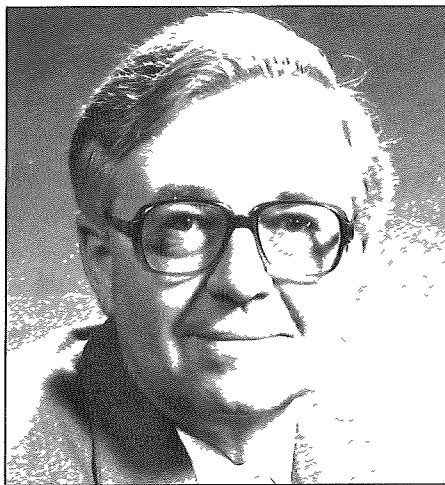
November 5, 1991

A round table discussion with Carter, Fast and Cane



Ross Carter

As we enter the mid point of the 1991 fall term, there are a number of important items on the agenda for Vancouver Community College. They include the current and future budget situation, the 1991-92 program profile, continued organizational change and the arrival of our new president - John Cruickshank. With these items in mind, Spectrum asked outgoing President Ross Carter to join KEC/City Centre Principal Lawrence Fast and Langara Principal David Cane for a round table discussion about some of these questions and concerns.



Lawrence Fast

SPECTRUM: Ross, speaking generally, what is our current budget situation?

CARTER: We still have one major area unresolved in this year's budget and that concerns the delivery of Arts and Sciences FTEs (full time equivalent students). As we're currently budgeted we are not going to make our FTE target.

The other difficulty that grows out of this year's budget is that we have committed to spending one time money to the order of \$2.1 or \$2.2 million. That is a millstone we will be dragging



David Cane

into next year's budget unless something is done.

In order for that not to happen, we are holding talks with the Ministry and representatives of the instructional bargaining units to see what can be done. We want to go into next year's budget without having to find approximately \$2 million.

The root of these problems seems to lie in the underfunding that is provided by the Ministry for vocational programs. That's what the College is pressing for - the addressing of that problem

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SPECTRUM: If we addressed the vocational funding problem and dealt with the one time expenditure problem you referred to at the beginning, would we then be in reasonable shape next year?

CARTER: Yes, we would be.

SPECTRUM: David Cane, can you tell us more about the Arts and Sciences FTE problem?

CANE: There are two problems. One is related to budget. We don't have an adequate operating budget at Langara this year to deliver all the Arts and Sciences FTEs for which the College is funded. We expect to be able to deliver 2800 FTEs in Arts and Sciences, but the College was funded for 3245 by the Ministry.

The second component is that because of a change in the way FTEs are calculated this year, it looks on paper as if we are less productive than we were in the past. Our FTE count has dropped by about 225 with no real change in activity. That compounds the problem.

SPECTRUM: Is there a solution?

CANE: The simple solution is to provide additional funding to Langara so we can offer more sections for Arts and Sciences students and increase our FTE count. That's limited to some extent by our physical capacity but I think we could deliver the 3245 we're funded for, given a full year to do it and given an adequate budget.

SPECTRUM: Turning to KEC/City Centre, Lawrence, what is your budget situation this year?

FAST: We have now put the budget in place for both campuses and I think there are a couple of problem areas. One is in the support area. The counselling department at King Edward had to reduce by the equivalent of one full time counsellor. The other problem is in trying to meet the demand which exists in certain vocational areas and in ESL.

We simply do not have the budget to meet increasing demand in a couple of areas of tourism and hospitality, in the Building

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Service Worker program, in electronics, and of course in ESL.

The other issue that remains one for further consideration is the reporting of FTEs for all the instructional programs at these two campuses. You'll recall that the Ministry has indicated some flexibility in the calculation of FTEs and the activities we can calculate. We are working to refine that but it's not easy because the schedule of instruction was set up last March and now to begin a different schedule of counting is difficult. So that remains out there and we have to work at it.

SPECTRUM: David, are you hoping not to see a repeat of last spring, when whole programs at Langara suddenly went on the chopping block?

CANE: I think we all feel that kind of last minute crisis management must end. It creates total havoc in the institution. It makes a mockery of planning.

We have underway at Langara a major process to plan educationally where we would like the campus to go. The potential cut of ten per cent of our instruction came on us during that planning process because of a budget crisis. People understandably looked around and said: "why are we bothering to do all of this planning work when the reality seems to be, we're lucky to survive from one year to the next?"

So that's got to be solved - long range.

CARTER: And the mechanisms are in place to solve it. Discussions are going on with the Ministry and the faculty/instructor groups to find a resolution to that fundamental budget problem we've been dealing with for several years.

SPECTRUM: On the question of restructuring at VCC, I'd like to ask you Lawrence, for a progress report on the KEC/City Centre merger.

FAST: I think you have to remember that this reorganization was a process that didn't happen all at once. We began talking about it last fall and we continued through the spring. Even when we began there were steps which were really only completed on paper on August 19th. We haven't had a lot of time to review. Some parts are working very well. I have found the peripatetic principal's role interesting, and quite enjoyable. The differences between the two campuses and their complementary aspects are great. There are other aspects which need improvement. Our instructional administration is just too lean. That's something we need to review and discuss because after all, changes are possible.

One of the really good things that has come about is the discussion among the seven division chairs about the co-operation that could occur between and among their programs. There are some real possibilities there which are being discussed right now and that will be good, in the long run, for the two campuses.

SPECTRUM: David, you have lost one administrative position at Langara Campus recently (the Dean of Career Programs, Ralph Kerr). Does the future hold other organizational changes at your campus?

CANE: The loss of the dean's position was in response to a budget problem. It was not done for organizational reasons. It was, and to some extent remains, difficult for the campus to come to terms with. We're now operating with our five division chairs reporting to a single dean. That's resulted in the workload of the dean and the division chairs and the department chairs all changing. We're

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going to have to find a way to provide some additional support for those people so that everything that needs to be done can continue to be done. So in that sense, there is more work to be done. But I don't foresee other major structural changes at Langara.

SPECTRUM: Ross, what is still left to be done with regard to overall college restructuring?

CARTER: Much of this was driven by financial need. While there are conceptual reasons for reorganizing at City Centre/KEC and probably at Langara also, the basic thing that was driving this was lack of dollars. Putting it into financial terms, the College will, as a result of the changes, save about \$790,000.00 a year if we continue with those positions vacant. So in the sense of being more productive in terms of our administrative cadre we are almost eight hundred thousand dollars more productive.

But the real test is to see if this is an effective way to administer a very large complex institution. That's still to be tested.

SPECTRUM: Are there still more eliminations to come?

CARTER: There's more to be looked at. The student services area and the administrative services area of KEC/City Centre will be reviewed to see if simplifications are possible. But for the time being we need to assess what we've done up to this point.

SPECTRUM: Ross, concerning the College's program profile for 1991-92 - can we expect a difficult fall with concerns and controversy similar to last year?

CARTER: If we resolve the financial problems, no. The first cut at the program profile has been done. That is on its way to the Ministry. They will get back to us in a couple of months to discuss their reactions to it and out of that should grow an agreeable (to all parties) program profile.

As long as we're not dealing with that problem in vocational funding, that \$2.1 million I mentioned earlier, we've got a

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working program profile. A number of problems which were around last year - a somewhat weak vocational demand, and some changes which were still conceptual, have been resolved. We're getting demand in tourism and hospitality. We're getting demand in the vocational areas in ways we weren't a year ago. So we've got a working program profile.

SPECTRUM: Lawrence, specifically, what will be happening at KEC/City Centre regarding program profile changes?

FAST: The program profile we've presented is a very stable one which has addressed growing demand in a couple of areas. The first priority expressed at City Centre was for the combined vocational/ESL programs and we are trying to make a case to include these in the base budget. There are a couple of other areas where demand is strong - tourism and hospitality, electronics, and some parts of the business division and of course at King Edward Campus - ESL which is the perennially strong and some would call, tragic, demand.

So the program profile we have presented reflects that and is otherwise a stable program which has grown partly from last

years' discussions but largely from the growing demand. There are now waiting lists for most of our vocational programs, some of which are already filled up to next March, which is good news.

SPECTRUM: David, are there changes coming up at Langara Campus?

CANE: The profile we projected over three years is also pretty stable. Demand for career programs is very good. Even a couple of programs that a year or two ago we were concerned about, seem to have picked up again. The area where we would like to make an increase is Arts and Sciences, but I think the most the campus can realistically do is a few hundred additional FTEs - maybe to catch up from the 2800 to the 3245 level I mentioned. There's no way we can meet the demand for Arts and Sciences education that exists in the lower mainland. That's a system problem. We are limited by capacity.

SPECTRUM: Ross, what do you anticipate happening next spring, when the contracts for all bargaining units expire?

CARTER: We have four collective agreements expiring in the spring. And with each we'll go through a somewhat different process. Langara is coming off a five year agreement and I'm sure the LFA (Langara Faculty Association) will have a number of things they will want to talk about. The VIA (Vocational Instructors' Association) is completing a two year agreement and I would expect there will be an assessment of their most recent contract (which was a considerable revision over the previous one) - how it's worked and what needs to be done. It's a similar situation for the VMREU (Vancouver Municipal and Regional Employees' Union) and the BCNU (B.C. Nurses' Union).

So these four will all be open March 31st and the College will enter into the collective bargaining process with the objective of getting good agreements which will be satisfactory to the College and all groups.

SPECTRUM: Are we in a different economic climate than we were two years ago?

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CARTER: Not really. My impression is that from the wages, salaries and benefits point of view the thing that's driving the collective bargaining process is the College's capacity to pay. We are subject to the swings and tilts of the provincial economy but the basic key is how we are funded and our capacity to pay

SPECTRUM: David, at Langara what sense do you get from the faculty about their feelings on this matter as they go into this period?

CANE: It's difficult to assess. I would say that from both sides, the five year collective agreement was a very long one and I think we are all looking forward to being able to make some changes. There is some degree of nervousness I think, as there is across the institution. The last two rounds of collective bargaining resulted in strikes and nobody wants that.

FAST: I sense too that there is great concern about avoiding a strike and any major confrontation this year and I certainly share that. I think one thing that grew out of our real difficulties in the spring concerning budget was the revelation of a number of shortfalls in our agreement concerning contracts and recall. I think we have mutual concerns on that and we'll be happy to address those because they concern us both.

SPECTRUM: One of the things which came out of those difficult negotiations was the question of "consultation" and how that might happen more effectively at VCC. Specifically at the campus level, starting with KEC/City Centre, what changes are planned on that question?

FAST: We are making efforts to provide the opportunity for consultation much more than we used to. We are discussing the possibility of larger committees to deal with instructional matters. For example, all the department heads and coordinators might be involved in an instructional council to deal with instructional programs. We have also set up question and answer sessions on a regular basis at City Centre and King Edward where all employees are invited to ask questions about the program profile, about renovations, about future plans, about the

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re-organization. That's certainly something we want to keep up

SPECTRUM: What's happening at Langara in that area (consultation)?

CANE: I think the campus already runs in a very consultative way. We have a group called the Langara Council which is involved in just about all decisions on campus either by making decisions or by making recommendations. That group represents people from across the campus. On the instructional side, because we have very few instructional administrators, most programming decisions are made with heavy involvement from faculty. That's always been the case at Langara. It's one of the very positive things about the structure we have.

I mentioned earlier the long range planning process that Langara has underway. That's a highly consultative process. Virtually everybody on site has had the opportunity for input into departmental plans, and those are still being built into a campus-wide document. That process is continuing.

SPECTRUM: Ross, how do you go about making consultation truly meaningful?

CARTER: First, it is absolutely vital that all relevant information flows to the various groups in the College - the division chairs, campus management groups, department heads, and other

employees who are to be involved in making decisions. That means a constant flow of information, which we have tended, particularly where it concerns financial matters, to hold, as an institution, fairly close to our chests. We need to put the necessary tools into the hands of the people.

The other thing is that from my talks with John Cruickshank, my perception is that he is committed to a strongly supportive communication model for decision making. I think you'll find that same kind of commitment from him, to get information out so that all decisions are informed ones.

SPECTRUM: Looking at the future - should the College's first development priority remain the one outlined in "Seize the Day" - to upgrade the Langara facility?

CANE: I think it should remain our first priority because of the need to serve our existing students well before we cater to new students (for example, by building a fourth campus). The students who are enrolled at Langara are in a facility that's twenty years old and has not had a major renovation since it was built, although there have been some piecemeal renovations.

It's also a facility which is drastically overcrowded. On the positive side though, we have a beautiful 20 acre site and can easily renovate and add to that campus in a way which properly caters to the needs of the existing population, both students and employees. That's the focus of the Langara renovation project. It's not to add people. It's to add improved facilities so we can serve our people better. And to serve our neighbourhood better by being less intrusive when it comes to things like parking and vehicle access.

SPECTRUM: Does this depend on new money or is this being planned for now?

CANE: This renovation project has been put forward to the Ministry in our long range facilities plan. The price tag is approximately \$45 million, with a third of that for seismic upgrading. We think funding in the region of \$30 million will

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be necessary to make the campus what it should be. In reality all that money may not come from the Ministry. We'll need to look at fundraising. We'll need to look at partnerships with other groups to make some of the work possible.

SPECTRUM: And is King Edward Campus still step two in future development?

FAST: Yes Both campuses are full. We really have no room for any significant increase in our capacity. One of my concerns, as you know, is that there are no recreation facilities at KEC and we have a plan to try and address that within a reasonably short time. Beyond that we would need an additional facility or a major expansion of this campus to address the needs of ESL students.

SPECTRUM: Ross, is a fourth campus for the whole college still on the wish list?

CARTER: It's on the College's books. My impression is that as a publicly funded facility this is not a high priority

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for the Ministry at this time. The reasons for that lie in the fact that land is relatively expensive in the Vancouver area. Also, in terms of population growth, the middle ring of suburbs is where the action is. Nevertheless the College has identified the need for an additional facility and we will keep pressing for that.

SPECTRUM: In conclusion what do you see as the pressing priorities for the coming year?

FAST: I do think our major task remains the question of adequate funding for all the programs at the College. I think we have to make every effort to persuade the Ministry that this is appropriate because the need is there.

CANE: I want to see three things happen. I want to see our long term funding, our operating budget problems, resolved for the whole College. That's critical. I want to see funding coming for the major facilities improvements that we need at Langara. And I want to see improvement in the general climate at VCC in terms of labour relations, the environment and relationships between various groups within the institution.

CARTER: I will simply say that the new president will be coming into a very vital, yeasty, successful institution, with some problems - funding problems, the problems of dealing with information in a large, complex organization, but really an institution that has played a significant role in Vancouver and will continue to do so. It's a great institution - always provocative and lively.