

Downey accepts challenge

By KEN CUTHBERTSON

Brunswickan Staff

Dr. James Downey accepted the challenge of becoming UNB's 14th President at his installation address at last Thursday's Fall Convocation. As UNB's President, Downey said he is dedicated to the "task and privilege of maintaining and enhancing" the university which had "long ago acquired a high and distinguished reputation."

Downey agreed his task is complex and demanding and that "it would be ingenuous or worse to pretend that the issues and challenges this university will face during the next few years will be other than difficult." The new President said he sensed an optimism for UNB and its graduates.

In the President's opening address he expressed his personal gratitude to the board of governors and the senate and to the faculty, students and staff who welcomed him. Downey said he realized the honor that was bestowed in him because UNB was not only a "venerable and respected university" but "an institution of strategic importance to New Brunswick and Canada."

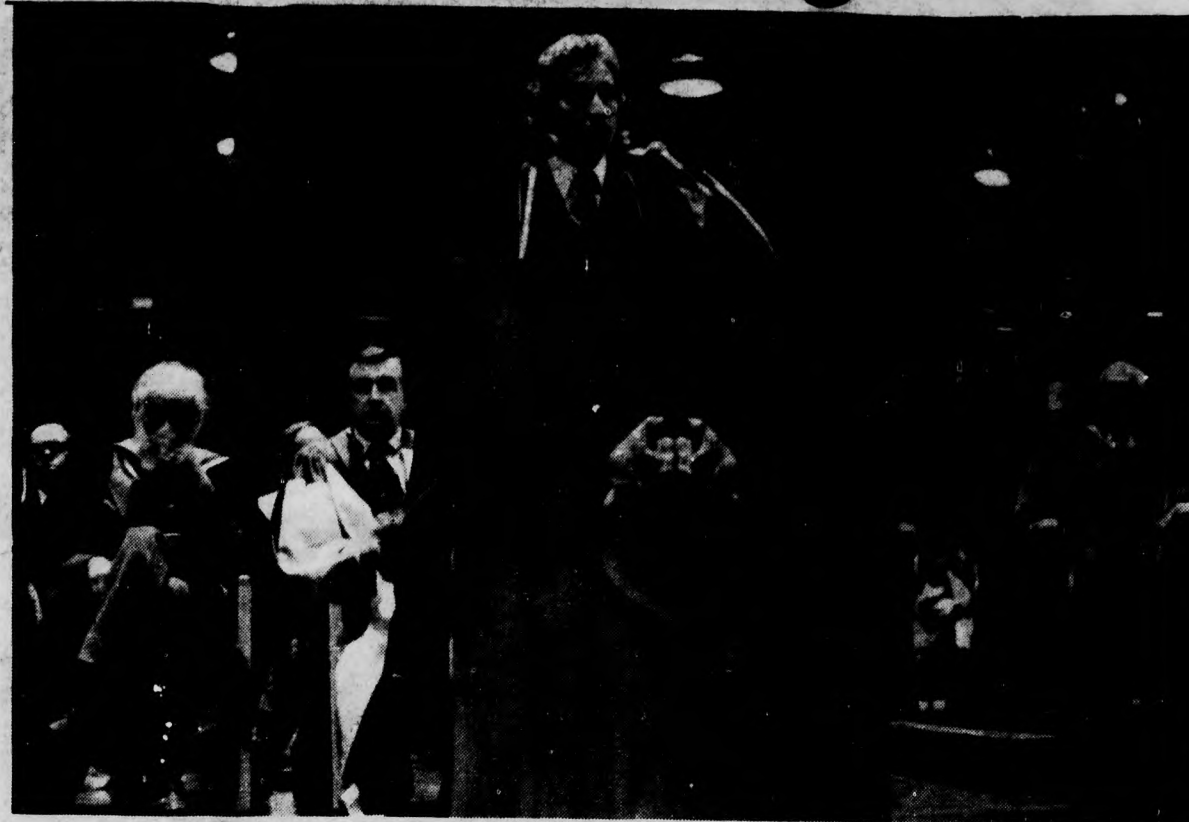
During his speech Downey addressed his opening prayer of invocation by Rev. Martin, President of St. Thomas with his Newfoundland wit by sarcastically

saying, "for not only has a Roman Catholic priest offered up the prayer of invocation, but a non-conformist and a Newfoundlander to boot, has taken the pledge of president!"

President Downey has been on the UNB campus for two months and made three observations about his new home.

"For better or worse the nature of our body politic has been irreversibly altered by the events of the past couple of years, and we must begin where we are and with new structures of governance we have set in place, and we must - all of us - have enough patience, forbearance, and trust to make them work well." He suggested that his colleagues mobilize their resources and put the past behind them.

Dr. Downey said the university serves New Brunswick by "discovering and disseminating knowledge; in the preservation and enhancement of our cultural and intellectual resources; in teaching men and women how to question, and inquire, to reason and form judgements." He observed that the "primary mission of a university is not to train but to educate; not to prepare students for jobs but to make them wiser and more civilized people," and said the institution is "inseparably linked to those of our provinces and our country."



His final observation is that at times in the history of UNB when students' antics and the eccentricities of professors led to strained

relations, even more menacing was anxiety that bordered on despair at times. Downey elaborated that history "shows that the people who were most creative

were those who dared to hope, to risk and to act in the face of uncertainly and adversity."

President Downey senses an optimism for the eighties and the UNB graduates because, he said, the graduates today were equipped with the "knowledge, skills, and attitudes" to make a living, and that UNB has "the people, the

talent, and the spirit to keep faith" to build and maintain UNB to serve the students, province, and country.

Downey spoke in the elegance of the English language and captivated more than 500 people who were in attendance at the graduation and installation ceremony.



DWAYNE MCLAUGHLIN Photo

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