

CHAPTER 5

TO BUILD OR NOT TO BUILD? ST. THOMAS 1952-1956

The Board is Encouraged

In April 1952 Rector Lynn McFadden convened the annual meeting of the St. Thomas Board. For the first time, the chancellor – Bishop of Bathurst Camille LeBlanc – was absent. He had called to say he had other commitments but to proceed without him. The board had a quorum, the rector took the chair, and the meeting came to order.

McFadden reported the good news about having finally secured a government grant for St. Thomas. It came, as we saw, after two years of negotiations with Ottawa over the initially unfavourable recommendation of the Massey Commission. He also reported the even more exciting news about having found a potential patron and benefactor for St. Thomas: Lord Beaverbrook.

The previous April McFadden had written to Lord Beaverbrook to ask if he would be willing to accept an honorary degree from St. Thomas. It would be the college's first such degree ever awarded. Typically, McFadden had not informed either the bishop or the board of his offer, yet he had been sure they would approve if the offer was accepted. Everyone was well aware of the many gifts Beaverbrook had bestowed elsewhere in the province, including in support of higher education. An eager UNB in 1947, for example, had made him its chancellor. St. Thomas was in need of a benefactor, and Beaverbrook was the ideal candidate. An honorary degree, particularly to a man who had never attended university, coming from the leading institution of higher education in the area of his childhood home, ought to be both enticing to the man and ultimately financially rewarding to the college. In his

March 1951 letter to Beaverbrook offering the honorary degree, McFadden had explained the reasons as follows:

As we are the only institute of higher learning on the Miramichi, it has long been our wish to express publicly our admiration and esteem for the greatest of the sons of the Miramichi.... Unfortunately a false humility or perhaps the consciousness of our relative unimportance has kept us mute in the past.

Characteristically, Beaverbrook replied immediately and graciously: "I accept with this assurance to you that I prefer recognition from my own home to recognition from elsewhere." He was not, however, able to attend the convocation planned for 1951 because of another commitment. He asked McFadden if it would be convenient to defer awarding the degree. McFadden, delighted, informed Beaverbrook that the conferring of the degree indeed could and would be postponed until such time as Beaverbrook found it "convenient to be in Chatham." The board, informed of this promising development, equally delighted, authorized the rector to make plans to award the degree at the May 1952 convocation.

Encouraged by the good news, the board in a hopeful frame of mind attended to St. Thomas's immediate finances. McFadden reported that the college during the past 1951-1952 academic year had spent over \$4,000 on three items: postgraduate studies for existing faculty, salaries for new faculty, and laboratory expenses. And this, he cautioned, was only the beginning. These expenses would rise steadily. In the meantime he wished to bring to the board's attention another major expense: the cost of running the high school programme.

Since its inception St. Thomas had included a secondary school programme, which as often as not had acted as a feeder for its post-secondary programmes in arts, nursing, and education. In the very early years, St. Thomas had even offered some elementary grades, although by now they had been transferred elsewhere in Chatham. There was wide community support for the high school programme at St. Thomas, yet from an economical point of view, declared the rector, it was a drain on the college's

finances. The cost of educating a high school student in the public schools was reckoned to be about \$100 a year, yet St. Thomas was charging fees of only \$50 per student. Besides, there were not enough priests to teach all the high school classes so that several lay teachers had to be hired. Their salaries totaled more than the fees. In McFadden's opinion it would be unconscionable to raise fees since many of the students came from poor families. Furthermore, graduates of the high school programme were excellent candidates for the college's post-secondary programmes, since the public schools were, as he put it, "getting away from the classics." McFadden asked the board members: Should they eliminate the high school programme altogether? If not, how much deficit could the college tolerate?

The board hesitated to answer the rector. It would be a dramatic policy decision to close down the long-standing programme, particularly without the bishop present. In the end, they avoided confronting the dilemma by voting to leave the matter to the judgment of the rector. Yet McFadden was not prepared either to make the decision himself or to let the matter drop. He suggested that they ask the bishop of Saint John to contribute something toward the cost of the secondary education of Catholic youths at St. Thomas, since a considerable number came from his diocese. One board member suggested that "a St. Thomas collection" might be taken up annually in all English-speaking Catholic parishes. Another objected, saying he foresaw difficulties soliciting contributions from parishes outside the Bathurst diocese. The bishops of those other dioceses would have to approve, but as everyone knew from the experience of dealing with Bishop Patrick Bray of Saint John and the negative if inconsequential Deferrari report four years previously in 1948, cooperation among the bishops, at least about jurisdictional matters, could be a touchy issue. The board members were clearly unwilling to deal with the matter. Whether because the bishop was absent, or because the board had yet to learn that it could and should take responsibility for running the college's affairs, the meeting ended with a non-decision. Discussion of these issues were postponed to its next meeting.

The next meeting of the board did not take place until the following year, in April 1953. This

time, however, the bishop attended. Members were told of the development regarding the honorary degree for Lord Beaverbrook. Despite expectations, illness had prevented him from attending convocation in 1952. He had asked McFadden if it would “be possible to arrange [another] date, even perhaps a special convocation, much as I would regret putting you to so much trouble.” McFadden replied: “We consider this of such importance that we would very gladly change the date of St. Thomas's graduation to fit your convenience.” By the end of summer still no firm date had been set. In late September, McFadden reported, he had received the following telegram:

IF YOUR CONVENIENCE IS SUITED I WILL PRESENT MYSELF TO THE UNIVERSITY
ON MONDAY 27TH OCTOBER AT HALF PAST TWO IN THE AFTERNOON STOP AND
WITH GRATEFUL THANKS FOR THE HONOUR YOU DO ME BEAVERBROOK

But the college, McFadden now reported, had been disappointed when Beaverbrook had had to cancel yet again on account of ill health. McFadden had persevered and replied that St. Thomas would postpone the degree-granting ceremony to the fall of the following year, on October 14, 1953, now six months hence.

In a still hopeful mood about a solvent and promising future, the board turned its attention to broader concerns. Was it more important for the college to build a strong faculty or to enhance its facilities by constructing new buildings? Fr. Raymond Hickey argued that the wisest course was first to establish a strong faculty. Buildings were important to any institution, he said, but “of primary importance was a strong and well equipped teaching body.” The bishop in this regard had some good news. He had assigned three newly-ordained priests to the college: Frs. David Walsh, Robert Gratton and Edmund Casey. The new priests would begin teaching in the high school.

Other college expenses during the year had involved supporting two teaching priests who were pursuing graduate studies in the US: Francis McGrath was studying in Boston, and George Martin was studying for his MA in English at Fordham University in New York City; together they had cost the university approximately \$900.

McFadden once again put before the board the issue of the deficit with the high school programme. The situation in 1953 had not changed from the previous year. The college still had too few priests to staff the high school, the rector still was having to hire lay teachers, and they still cost more money than the priests. Yet “in all fairness to parents” he did not think tuition could be raised. Increased tuition would drive many good students away. Board member Leonard O’Brien, a successful businessman and recently (until 1945) the MP in Ottawa for Northumberland, thought the college should impress on high school students the importance of accepting responsibility for financial obligations. He attempted to introduce a motion: “Where circumstances warrant, that such students upon leaving the institution be given a document to be signed by the student obligating him or her to the payment of all indebtedness to the College.” The rector responded that many Catholic parents of St. Thomas's high school students simply could not afford to pay to send their children to school, although for them and for the college it was important to have them come to St. Thomas rather than have to attend the public schools. In light of the ensuing discussion, O'Brien withdrew his motion.

The bishop offered to look for some money to make up the extra owed by those students unable to pay full fees. The rector asked the bursar, McGrath, if he knew how many students were unable to pay all or part of their tuition. The bursar replied that there were fourteen of them, although many others were “not much better off.” The board left it to the bishop to decide which students would get what from the extra money. The rector pointed out that although the extra would help those students, it would still not cover the deficit of the high school programme as a whole. It was a dilemma, for which he had no solution. As to the larger question of eliminating the high school altogether, the bishop and the board once again put it on the back burner.

The board was more confident with dealing with land purchases for the college. Apparently forgetting his earlier agreement to get the board's permission before buying land, McFadden informed the board that during the previous year he had acquired for the college some additional land at a good

price, two more pieces of farm land totaling twenty-seven acres for \$1400, where new buildings could be located when the time came. The board, apparently equally forgetful, approved his purchase.

Concerning repairs to existing buildings at St. Thomas, McFadden thought that with some necessary repairs, in particular to the high school buildings, the college could carry on for a few more years. The old H-huts purchased earlier from the Airport for the high school classrooms, however, had exceeded “by some years” their expected life span. \$1,000 had been spent on repairs, but the buildings presented “difficulties to both students and faculty” and extensive repairs were needed to make them usable. Other expenses during the year, the rector reported, involved \$2,500 for the construction of handball courts and \$916 on paving roadways, the area near the administration building, and other spaces used for recreation. (He was pleased that he had got the local contractors to reduce their original estimate of \$4,583 as a contribution to the college). The college had also spent \$420 on tiling some floors.

In the broader picture, the rector reported, expenditures had exceeded revenues by some \$20,000. Yet he did not see the deficit as a major problem, given the recent agreement by the federal and provincial governments to award annual grants to St. Thomas. The board accepted his assurances. As for constructing new buildings, however, the board members advised caution. The consensus of the meeting was that “the time was not right to attempt construction of any consequence at present.” And yet, thanks to the bishop's fund-raising drive, just now in the spring of 1953 St. Thomas had some money in the bank and was finally in a position to be able to consider undertaking new construction. Furthermore, it was not outlandish to think that the proposed honorary degree recipient, presuming he would finally come in the following October to receive his degree, would show his gratitude to St. Thomas in concrete ways.

“The Beaver's” background is well-known. The First Baron Beaverbrook was born William Maxwell (“Max”) Aitken in Maple, Ontario, on 25 May 1879. In 1880 his father, a Scottish-born Presbyterian minister, moved with his family to Newcastle, New Brunswick. Beaverbrook would always refer to Newcastle and the Miramichi as home. Something of a rebel against his dour father, he left Newcastle for Chatham in 1896 to work as an apprentice in a law firm and a political adviser for one of its lawyers, R. B. Bennett, who eventually would become prime minister of Canada. The ambitious, if rather undisciplined, young Max sampled but rejected a career in law and instead went on to learn about business in the Stairs family's banking firm in Halifax. He gained a grudging public respect for his financial genius – grudging because he was fearless about stepping on people's toes. Moving to England in 1910, already rich but under a cloud of suspicion about the nature of his wealth creation, he began to build the newspaper empire that made him famous as the “Baron of Fleet Street.” Having cultivated powerful British politicians, including fellow New Brunswicker Andrew Bonar Law (born in Rexton in 1858) and including Winston Churchill and David Lloyd George, Max Aitken the millionaire was knighted in 1911. Then Sir Max was given a peerage in 1917. He considered taking the title “Lord Miramichi,” but recognizing that the English would certainly mispronounce it he chose “Lord Beaverbrook” instead, after a small community near Newcastle where he said as a boy he used to go fishing. A self-made man without any higher education himself, he nevertheless in his philanthropic activities did much to encourage and support post-secondary education. His correspondence regarding matters at St. Thomas sheds an interesting light on the man's outlook and method of operation, whether in the world of business, politics, or philanthropy.

To the people of the region, he was “the Miramichi’s most distinguished son.” His relationship with St. Thomas went back to his boyhood days. He remembered Bishop Rogers and, as he wrote to McFadden in 1949, “like all the people on the Miramichi I had respect, admiration & gratitude for him and his work.” In spite of his Protestant background, Beaverbrook was decidedly catholic in his choice

of friends. Fr. Dixon, the parish priest in Newcastle who had taught at St. Michael's College in the 1870's, was one such friend, often loaning young Max his horse and carriage when the latter resided in Chatham working for the Tweedie law firm. Later, when he established scholarships for New Brunswick teachers to study at the University of London, he would instruct his trustees to include at least one person of French and at least one of Irish background.

Thus, in the spring and summer of 1953, the anticipation of welcoming the famous seventy-four-year-old into the St. Thomas community was palpable. And McFadden's fourth attempt succeeded. By the fall of 1953 Beaverbrook had recovered his health. Furthermore, in an intimation of the rivalry that would develop between St. Thomas and UNB – for it is said the impish Beaverbrook enjoyed causing divisions even among his friends – he had recently resigned as Chancellor of UNB because of the refusal of the UNB Senate to appoint as its president his friend and nominee Colin B. Mackay, the young and wealthy lawyer from Saint John. He considered the opposition “to young Mackay quite unjustifiable.”

Beaverbrook was accustomed to having his way. Under UNB's Act of Incorporation the provincial government had the power to appoint the university's president, so the premier, Hugh John Flemming, hoping to mollify Beaverbrook, overrode the UNB Senate and simply appointed Mackay president. From Flemming's point of view, it worked, and Beaverbrook reversed his resignation. Yet, as the latter wrote to a Miramichi friend, Kay O'Brien, he felt the government had behaved foolishly in forcing Mackay's appointment “when the same result could have been secured by what might be called 'peaceful' means.” One supposes those “peaceful means” might have entailed some subtle arm-twisting, possibly a change in bequests. Already, some (unspecified) disagreements had arisen over Beaverbrook's offer to build a hockey rink for UNB and the city of Fredericton. “I have been embarrassed twice,” he wrote O'Brien, “over the proposed rink for the university, and the new President. It is my belief that Colin Mackay will make a President of the first rank. He will surely

receive support. I only wish he had been given an easier induction.”

Beaverbrook arrived back in the province in early October, 1953. On the 10th he paid an informal visit to the provincial Law School in Saint John, which at one point in his youth he had attended briefly before dropping out, and to which he had recently donated money and his handsome red-brick Georgian mansion, “Beaverbrook House.” (He was a consistent supporter of New Brunswick's Law School. In 1959 the School would move from Saint John to Beaverbrook's residence in Fredericton to begin its association with UNB. The residence, called Somerville House, was an impressive 1886 wooden mansion on Waterloo Row which Beaverbrook donated to UNB. Later it would be sold to the province to become the residence of the Lieutenant-Governor, and even later re-gifted to UNB to become the president's official residence.) When asked about his itinerary, he told reporters he planned to go to Newcastle and Chatham to visit St. Thomas before returning to Somerville House in Fredericton. Asked about public engagements he replied: “The only public engagement I have in the Province, and the only one I mean to undertake, is at St. Thomas University in Chatham. Long since they have offered me a degree and I am presenting myself next Wednesday in the hope they are still in the same mind.”

The “Beaverbrook Convocation”

Convocation at St. Thomas was set for October 14 1953. On October 9 the *North Shore Leader* carried a full page spread about Beaverbrook and his various gifts to the region, including “The Enclosure” – a restored historical site at Wilson’s Point – and several structures in Newcastle: the Old Manse Library (actually his boyhood home), the Sinclair Rink, a memorial to early settlers, Memorial Field, and the Community Centre then under construction. .

Beaverbrook stayed with his old friends, Leonard and Kay O'Brien, at their home in Nelson (near Chatham). The former, a local businessman and politician and future Lieutenant-Governor of

New Brunswick, as we have seen happened to be on the board of governors at St. Thomas.

Beaverbrook's week-long visit to the Miramichi was the event of the year, especially for McFadden and St. Thomas. On the day of convocation, before the ceremonies began, Beaverbrook met with some three hundred St. Thomas students. The students were thrilled and made him an honorary member of the class of 1954. He urged them not to be dependent on others but to "go out and discover things for yourselves."

The festivities in Chatham did not pass unnoticed in Fredericton. UNB decided to hold their own fall convocation, their "first fall convocation in many years," on precisely the same day as St. Thomas's. One of those receiving an honorary degree was Premier Hugh John Flemming. By way of conciliation, Flemming took the occasion to give a long speech praising the absent Beaverbrook for his service to the province and expressed his hope, which he thought was also the university's wish, "that some convenient means will be found so that his Lordship may retain his official connection with this institution in some capacity." Evidently there was fear in some quarters that Beaverbrook might switch his support from UNB to St. Thomas. Those fears were groundless. The new president of UNB, Mackay, was Beaverbrook's protege. On the other hand, one might have been forgiven for entertaining other fears, namely, St. Thomas's ability to withstand Mackay's intentions to bring it to his campus.

But for the moment, if anyone in Chatham had those fears, they were not expressing them. "Dr. Max Aitken, Lord Beaverbrook." The award was a stroke of genius on McFadden's part and much appreciated by the famous but non-formally educated seventy-four year old Miramichier. It cemented Beaverbrook's affection for St. Thomas. The day after convocation, Beaverbrook wrote McFadden telling him that "the occasion yesterday when you conferred the Doctor of Laws upon me was memorable in my act of life. You have honoured me in my home and in the presence of my boyhood companions." McFadden was equally pleased. He had been worried about whether or not such a famous person would accept an honorary degree from such a small university. Leonard O'Brien wrote

Beaverbrook several weeks later about a recent meeting with McFadden, who

has not yet settled down after the big event in his life. I know that he hesitated a long time before he suggested a degree to you, and your acceptance caused all the college a great deal of pleasure.... For a small institution they gave a particularly fine Convocation, which seemed to have real warmth, and you were in top form.

The warmth was not only for St. Thomas. Beaverbrook appreciated McFadden's honesty and taciturn simplicity. He had no time for sycophants, and McFadden was a true Miramichier. The affection of His Lordship for the Reverend Rector indeed produced beneficial results almost immediately for St. Thomas.

Even before receiving his honorary degree, Beaverbrook had asked his agent in New Brunswick, Robert Tweedie, to determine St. Thomas's needs. A week after convocation, on October 21, 1953, Tweedie had written Beaverbrook to say he had been up to Chatham and had looked over the St. Thomas campus. He intended to ask Garnet Wilson, an architect in Saint John, to go with him to "look into the projects which your Lordship has in mind." He had taken note of the college's hockey rink, "a rather ramshackle building." He now proposed that he and Wilson look into the possibility of "a rink for St. Thomas as well as a swimming pool."

New Hockey Rink vs New Classrooms

Shortly afterwards Tweedie and Wilson visited St. Thomas together and on November 3 Wilson submitted his report to Tweedie. It was not encouraging. Concerning the rink, Wilson described it as a semicircular, forty-year-old structure, built with laminated wood trusses in 1913. The trusses had warped out of shape and were only being held up by iron rods extending right across the building. The roof was in poor condition. It had no ice plant and could only be used for a few months of the year when temperatures were below freezing. The entire structure was in such poor condition that the college played its hockey games in the new Sinclair rink in Newcastle, a gift to the town by

Beaverbrook a few years earlier.

Wilson, fortunately for us, went beyond his mandate from Beaverbrook to consider a rink and pool for St. Thomas, for his report provides us with a good description of all the college buildings in the early 1950s. From his descriptions we can understand the rector's concerns about over-crowding at St. Thomas. Wilson first described the Administration building. Constructed in 1920, the exterior was free-stone, in "good design and appearance," three storeys high. It had a well-used basement containing four dining rooms, a kitchen, a laundry, and an annex, which contained the heating equipment for the building and the nearby gymnasium building; the equipment consisted of two cast iron sectional boilers with two domestic hot water tanks and stokers for coal. The building's ground floor contained offices and class rooms and a dormitory at the west end. The second floor had bedrooms for the priests and a large dormitory and locker room for students. The third storey contained a chapel, more bedrooms, and another dormitory.

Wilson next described the Bishop's Palace, a large building on the eastern side of the campus with "a pleasing design of free-stone with a mansard roof." It had originally been constructed as the bishop's residence when Chatham was still the see of the diocese. When the see was moved to Bathurst, as we saw, it was taken over by the college and, although still referred to as the Bishop's Palace, turned into a building of many uses. It was three storeys high with a basement and a large annex at the rear. According to Wilson it was "much over-crowded." The basement had two classrooms, alongside the heating room with its coal stoker and boilers. The ground floor contained the library, a reading room, and one more classroom. The second and third floors contained bedrooms for staff as well as for the boarding arts students. Wilson discovered that the first students to get to the sinks in the morning got all the hot water, and anyway it was almost impossible to get hot water on the upper floors.

The Gymnasium building, Wilson reported, was quite small, of wood construction with a masonry basement, which contained dressing rooms, toilets and showers. It was heated by radiators

using hot water from the boilers in the Administration building.

Since the two main buildings did not have enough classrooms, Wilson reported, several old army H-huts had been purchased by the college, brought over from the airport after the war and set up near the Administration building. They provided classrooms for the high school students and were heated by hot air. Wilson described them as “far below modern standards.”

The college also rented one large classroom at St. Michael's Academy, the school in Chatham with past connections to St. Thomas. That classroom, according to Wilson, was the only decent classroom at the college. The college also had to rent the auditorium at St. Michael's for large gatherings, such as convocations.

The land that the college owned was extensive, reported Wilson, and the buildings were elevated well above the town. A public highway divided the campus, and the town water supply went through the back of the campus. There was a good potential building site between the administration building and the gymnasium. A possibly better site existed on the other side of the road through the campus. There was also a good football field and tennis and hand-ball courts. At the rear of the college property were fields with a barn.

In Wilson's opinion, there was room for improvement everywhere at the college (a sentiment shared by faculty and students). Construction of modern classrooms, he suggested, would alleviate the crowded sleeping and study rooms in the other buildings. The heating apparatus was barely able to cope with present requirements and needed to be replaced with modern equipment. Certainly the hockey rink had to be replaced.

The board, as we have seen, had wrestled unsuccessfully with these problems for years. Now, although as yet unknown to the board, some solutions appeared to be at hand. Wilson's report was forwarded to Beaverbrook on November 12th. The latter appears to have been most interested in the hockey situation. He wrote Tweedie that if the cost were not too high he might be willing to pay for a

new rink for the town of Chatham similar to the one built in Newcastle, to be operated by the university and made available for the town's general use. Did Tweedie and the architect think that would be a reasonable way to spend \$100,000 to help St. Thomas?

Tweedie passed Beaverbrook's comments on to Wilson on November 23. Wilson obviously did not share Beaverbrook's concern for hockey. "There are so many things that St. Thomas needs," he wrote Tweedie, "that I feel sure that between us we can make some worthwhile suggestion to Lord Beaverbrook for his consideration." Tweedie wrote Beaverbrook that St. Thomas needed so many things in order to carry on its work that "almost anything which your Lordship might do would be a distinct advantage." A rink would be very nice, but "at this stage in its life" there were things the college needed more. (He pointed out that the rink in Newcastle had cost approximately \$200,000, not \$100,000.) The architect Wilson estimated that a new classroom building would cost in the vicinity of \$135,000, plus \$5,000 for furnishings. "The first essential to a university is good classrooms," he wrote. The present classrooms were inadequate. If his Lordship were to build a new classroom building, the old one could be converted into dormitories. New modern classrooms would "lift the university to a higher standard" and attract more students

Wilson had actually prepared a plan for a modern, eight-classroom building with a large auditorium in the basement. His plans called for teacher's closets, bookcases, wardrobes, chalk boards, pin boards, and a principal's office.

New Hockey Rink vs New Gymnasium

Beaverbrook vetoed Tweedie's and Wilson's plans. In a letter dated November 25, barely a month after receiving his honorary doctorate, he wrote that he was "not greatly attracted" to building a classroom building for St. Thomas. If he could build a hockey rink for \$200,000, however, he was willing to consider that, provided it was built in the town of Chatham, although its management could

be entrusted to the university. As an alternative, he could provide funds for a new Gymnasium for St. Thomas, although “not on the lavish lines” of the one he had provided for UNB. He had in mind something smaller, costing “about 100,000 and it would have to have a basketball court.”

Tweedie tried to reason with Beaverbrook. He suggested that a new hockey rink might create problems. The Newcastle rink was costing more to operate than the revenues it brought in. A rink in Chatham might draw business away from Newcastle, and then both rinks would be in financial trouble. A proper gymnasium for St. Thomas might be a good alternative. The present gym was “a very inadequate affair,” although a new gym would allow the old one to be converted to classroom or dormitory use. Wilson was devising plans for a gymnasium that might cost around \$100,000. Both felt it should be designed so that it could be used as an auditorium with a stage platform. On December 3 Tweedie forwarded Wilson’s gymnasium plans to Beaverbrook. It sported a basketball court, dressing rooms along one side, seating for 650, and a stage with sufficient space for the graduating class and officials. The basement would have changing rooms, lockers, and shower-rooms for boys and for girls. The cost would be about \$150,000.

New Hockey Rink vs Indoor Pool

But Beaverbrook was as little interested in a gymnasium with built-in stage as he had been in a new classroom building. He decided instead he might like to build a swimming pool for St. Thomas. It was at this stage that McFadden, who until now had been kept in the dark, finally learned something about Beaverbrook’s eleemosynary intentions towards his *alma mater*. On January 30, 1954, he received a letter from Beaverbrook informing him that he “would be willing to consider the possibility of building a swimming pool.” In his usual quality-minded way he pointed out that the indoor pool “would have to be of standard size, adequately housed, heated and serviced with water, continuously washed by the modern process now in use.” He realized there might be some problems in doing this

but he wondered if the St. Thomas faculty and board would give their approval. If so he would see that the project be “brought to a successful conclusion.”

The letter delighted McFadden on the one hand, knowing that Beaverbrook was seriously considering giving them a substantial gift. On the other hand, he was perplexed. To him, in light of the college's space needs, an indoor pool was a luxury. To stall for time, he wrote back that it would be difficult to convene the board right away since the Miramichi was being “treated to a really old-fashioned Canadian winter” and the board members were scattered over the province in Moncton, Fredericton, Campbellton and elsewhere. But he promised to convene the board as soon as possible to consider Beaverbrook's generous offer.

McFadden did not know how to proceed. He appears to have discussed the problem with Leonard O'Brien, a board member and close friend of Beaverbrook's, for two weeks later in February O'Brien brought Tweedie and McFadden together to a luncheon at his home in Nelson to consider Beaverbrook's offer. According to Tweedie's later correspondence with Beaverbrook, McFadden at first was hesitant to speak his mind, mentioning the delicacy of his position. He appreciated Beaverbrook's offer but wondered “how indelicate he might be thought” if he were to make a counter-proposal. Tweedie assured him Beaverbrook welcomed frankness.

McFadden, unburdened, told the other two that an indoor pool was a luxury the college could ill afford. It would be costly to maintain and would siphon off funds needed urgently elsewhere. He and his staff had been trying to accumulate funds for “needed new buildings” in order to improve the operation of the college. They desperately needed two new buildings, possibly as extensions to the present Administration building. The first building was needed to provide fifteen rooms for offices and living quarters for faculty and twenty-five smaller rooms to house fifty boarding students. Construction costs, McFadden reckoned, would amount to some \$300,000. A second structure was needed for chapel facilities to seat six hundred, and an auditorium, also to seat about six hundred. This would cost another

\$200,000. They also needed, continued McFadden, a new hockey rink for recreational purposes. The old one was about to fall down. McFadden thought he could build a suitable rink for \$100,000, or maybe less, since he could get much of the work done locally at cost or nearly so.

After the meeting Tweedie wrote Beaverbrook to assure him of McFadden's gratefulness for Beaverbrook's "magnificent offer and interest in the university." But he also made it clear that he shared McFadden's opinion that an indoor pool was not what the university needed.

New Hockey Rink

McFadden's frankness paid off, at least regarding a new hockey rink. Beaverbrook scrapped the idea of a swimming pool and sent Tweedie a telegramme to tell McFadden he could go forward with a hockey rink on St. Thomas's campus, for which he would provide one hundred thousand dollars. He added: "he can return any surplus." He instructed Tweedie to announce publicly that he had offered to St. Thomas's Board of Governors to build a hockey rink for the students.

McFadden was genuinely pleased this time. He called all the board members, then Tweedie, then he wrote Beaverbrook to thank him for his generous gift which would be

a source of unending gratitude on the part of us who for so many years have labored to better the lot of the sons of the Miramichi, and your entrance with us in this work is a great morale boost to push us to greater endeavours.

He assured him that "the rejoicing of the members of the Board is unanimous," and that this was "the first munificence" that had ever come to St. Thomas.

Bishop LeBlanc was also pleased. On March 1 he wrote McFadden that

the issue of the Lord Beaverbrook's offer came out most satisfactorily after all. We would have been ill-advised to refuse or hesitate to accept. Now, this leaves us with the other problem of further extension of the College in due time. When shall be the opportune time? This is not easy to say.

O'Brien also wrote to Beaverbrook admiring his generosity. "It must be thrilling," he wrote his friend,

“to be able to do such things – so few do so even when they could.” He remarked that before the Convocation the previous fall when Beaverbrook had entered the college's affairs, McFadden had been “in a sort of tail-spin.” The rink was just the thing for St. Thomas since “the whole Province is so hockey minded and the Town of Chatham especially.”

Beaverbrook replied that he was delighted that his gift “is giving so much satisfaction.” Kay O'Brien, Leonard's wife, wrote Beaverbrook that

those plucky underweight hockey players who seem to understand clean sports will now have many extra weeks to play with artificial ice – and so much less effort in planning their practice and games. Their rink was always a paying proposition so perhaps you have given Father McFadden a gold mine.

Beaverbrook wanted it understood that the project was to be under the personal supervision of McFadden, who had impressed him with his attention to detail. The rector would work with a small committee and open a trust account at one of the banks for accounting purposes. The two-person committee would consist of Kay O'Brien and John Creaghan, a member of the St. Thomas board from Newcastle and the son of Donald Creaghan, businessman and boyhood friend of Beaverbrook's. Kay O'Brien informed Beaverbrook that McFadden had been in for a Sunday night visit and was “still breathless at the first good fortune that has come to the College. He sits in a semi-trance and says ‘That great and good man!’”

McFadden Reappointed as Rector

At the board's annual meeting that spring, 1954, the bishop informed the board that McFadden's term as rector was once again expiring, and that he wanted him to continue for a third three-year term. He informed the board that “after some little persuasion” from him, McFadden had agreed to stay on. But it was not quite as simple as the last time.

A lot of water had flowed under the bridge in the past three years and new challenges had

emerged. Enrolment was steady and promised to grow, but only if new facilities could be provided. Yet the college's finances had turned around so that new facilities were now a real possibility. A new and generous benefactor had appeared thanks to the rector's personal efforts. And a new hockey rink was in the works. The situation to all appearances had improved dramatically for both McFadden and St. Thomas. A newly self-confident McFadden was more willing to sign on for another term than he had been in 1951, and yet, had the bishop told him of the jurisdictional changes afoot to transfer Chatham and St. Thomas from his diocese to that of the newly appointed bishop of Saint John, he might not have been quite so keen. The transfer of diocesan jurisdiction promised to bring forward once again the old issue of St. Thomas's location, and indeed its very future on the Miramichi. Although everyone was aware that Bishop Patrick Bray, St. Thomas's old nemesis, had died in June the previous year and been replaced in the Diocese of Saint John by a new bishop, Alfred Leverman, no one suspected that the replacement would become St. Thomas's new chancellor. And the bishop was not at liberty to indicate that such might be the case.

So McFadden was willing to consider reappointment, but not without first challenging LeBlanc's authority as chancellor. The bishop, after perusing the Act of incorporation, no doubt with some reminding, realized that appointment of the rector was not entirely in his hands. According to the Act, "the Board of Governors of the said College" had the "power and authority to manage and control all the affairs of the said College." Furthermore, the board was authorized "to elect a president, vice-president, secretary and such other officers as may be deemed necessary" from among the Board members. Thus, election of the rector (president) had to be done by the board, although evidently LeBlanc still considered the board's approval a formality.

When approached by the bishop, however, McFadden, while not questioning the board's or the bishop's ultimate authority, suggested that the teaching priests on faculty at the college should have a say in the choice of rector. His note to the bishop was diplomatic, stating his belief "for good order and

progress of the Institution that the Rector should be acceptable to (and capable of working with) the Faculty. I am sure the members of the Board of Governors would fully endorse this and give whole-hearted support to the man named by the Bishop upon the advice of the Faculty.” He suggested the bishop canvas all the priests at St. Thomas to find out who they wanted to be rector for the next three years. He even enclosed a “suggested letter form to obtain (secretly, if desired) the priest that each member of the Faculty would desire to have as Rector.”

The bishop, uncharacteristically, took McFadden's advice. He forwarded a letter to all the priests at the college, asking them to indicate if they wanted McFadden to be reappointed for a third term or if they preferred another priest be named to the office. If so, they were to indicate their choice by filling in a name in the space provided. (The lay faculty were not asked for their opinion.) The priests, or at least most of them, voted to keep McFadden on as rector. The bishop concurred, the board concurred with the bishop's recommendation, and the tentative essay in democracy concluded successfully. Aware that he may have set a unwanted precedent, however, two days later LeBlanc wrote a letter to the faculty reasserting his authority, indeed quite unconstitutionally asserting his authority over the board. He informed them that:

- 1) the appointment of the Rector of St. Thomas College, Chatham, belongs to the Bishop of Bathurst; 2) the term of office of the Rector is 3 (three) years to be renewed at the discretion of the Bishop; 3) this appointment is presented to the Board of Governors for approval.

The board members were relieved that McFadden had agreed to continue as rector, which allowed them to side-step the issue of the bishop's legal authority vis-à-vis the board, or indeed the even touchier issue of faculty enfranchisement. In return they agreed to McFadden's request that the vice-rector and the bursar, both of whom were faculty members, be made *ex-officio* members of the board. As McFadden explained, all the other board members were either parish priests or members of the laity and it was therefore important to have two members of faculty besides himself on the board. It was not difficult for the board, or the bishop, to accept the idea of the *ex-officio* memberships. The

issue of faculty *qua* faculty membership on the board, however, would prove to be a highly contentious issue down the road.

In other business at the 1954 board meeting Rector McFadden reported that Dr. Campbell, the professor of English, come fall would be leaving for a year of study. Also, through negotiations with Dr. Desmond Pacey, Chair of the English Department at UNB, the rector had arranged for Robert Whalen, a graduate student in English at UNB who lived in Newcastle, to replace Campbell for the year.

The rector then presented the board with his financial report. Among the items was the recent purchase of a farm by the college. It is instructive to see how McFadden justified the purchase. The farm was already providing “a large percentage” of the meat and vegetables needed to feed the students and staff, so that, given the high cost of food, expenses at the college would have been much greater without the farm. Besides the food, other revenue from the farm exceeded the cost of maintenance “by a substantial amount.” The board “wholeheartedly” recommended “continuance of the farm.” In fact, McFadden had continued with his plan of accumulating land around the university to provide for future expansion. He had also purchased a parcel of land adjoining the college property from the Sisters of the Hôtel Dieu Hospital for \$1,541, which he called a bargain. The board approved the purchase unanimously, forgetting entirely its earlier ruling about requiring prior board approval for land purchases, even assuring the rector that in the future “he was at liberty to make purchases of land for the university.” Finally having some money in the kitty appears to have given the board members a sense that St. Thomas had emerged from the woods.

The biggest news McFadden had for the board at its 1954 meeting, however, was the extraordinary and unexpected gift from Lord Beaverbrook following his acceptance of the honorary degree the preceding October. Beaverbrook had promised \$100,000 toward a new hockey rink for the college, to replace the old “dilapidated” one. The rector was anxious to begin work. Lest any members

doubted his personal responsibility, he reminded them that it was “the expressed wish of Lord Beaverbrook that all matters relative to the construction of this Rink be entirely under the Rector's supervision.” But board members were only too happy to let McFadden oversee the project.

St. Thomas's green and gold banner was flying high. The board even gave McFadden a vote of thanks for his excellent work over the years. He mentioned that he would probably require additional funds since the rink would probably cost about \$115,000, but he had no intention of asking Beaverbrook for more money. The board thereupon passed a motion giving him permission to spend an additional \$25,000 should it be necessary. (Later, when Beaverbrook heard that McFadden had had to exceed the \$100,000, he would send the college a cheque for the additional amount, stating that he wanted the entire rink to be his gift to St. Thomas.)

The reappointment of Rector McFadden was made public on April 26, 1954.

Building the Rink

McFadden devoted a great deal of his time to the rink project. He had already spent some time looking at other rinks. In March he had traveled to Nova Scotia to see a rink that was being dismantled and that was for sale for \$45,000. It turned out to be unsuitable for Chatham snowfall since it had a flat roof. By June he had visited almost all the rinks in the Maritimes. He wrote Beaverbrook to ask if he wished to be informed directly about details of the rink's construction or whether he should inform Mr. Tweedie. Beaverbrook replied that he would be pleased to be kept informed of the rink's construction, although not about the finances. Those he entrusted to McFadden's rink committee of O'Brien and Creaghan, which was to pay the bills that McFadden submitted.

Kay O'Brien's husband, Leonard, was also keeping an eye on the project and wrote Beaverbrook from time to time. In July he informed Beaverbrook that McFadden had done a lot of “personal work” and now had plans nearing completion and expected to have all the estimates in soon.

He advised Beaverbrook somewhat nervously of McFadden's "mode of action," that he was "his own master builder," personally contracting to purchase all components, such as the steel for the frame, in order to save money. He also intended to hire his own crew to assemble the building rather than hire a contractor. O'Brien had taken the liberty of advising McFadden to obtain the services of an experienced, competent supervisor or foreman "to watch over mundane things." McFadden, fortunately, took O'Brien's advice and hired an experienced supervisor.

McFadden was in his element. He bought locally whenever possible, negotiating with suppliers for the best deal. He exchanged some of the college's land for a better site for the rink, across the road from the football field. He saved \$10,000 by getting engineering friends to draw up the plans and supervise construction. They nixed his plans for wooden roof beams, explaining that snow loads required a steel frame. The decision delayed things but by July construction of the rink was underway.

The rink was to have an ice surface 80' x 185'. That was somewhat smaller than Beaverbrook's Sinclair Rink in Newcastle, which was five feet wider and six feet longer, but McFadden was trying to save Beaverbrook money. He offered to send Beaverbrook copies of all the plans when they were prepared, but the latter declined the offer. He did, however, point out to McFadden that "there is a standard size rink" and he asked him whether or not he was conforming to that size, adding that "if you are not doing so, I would rather give you more money for that purpose." Beaverbrook's offer was too late. The steel trusses had been ordered and redesigning them would cost too much. Besides, wrote McFadden, the larger the rink the greater the operating costs, which "could be a serious budget problem."

The Money

Initially there were complications about handling Beaverbrook's money. The plan had been for McFadden to take the bills to Beaverbrook's two trustees who would pay them. One of the trustees,

however, John Creaghan, left to visit Ireland and England for an extended period. Before leaving he signed a number of blank cheques and left them with McFadden. Kay O'Brien was understandably upset. As the other trustee she had to co-sign the cheques, but there no one to inspect McFadden's accounts. She needed some direction. She wrote Beaverbrook suggesting that "good clergymen are not necessarily good businessmen." She had "no knowledge of Father McFadden's business ability" but felt that some discretion was needed in the handling of so much money. The trustees had no clear instructions. She was "horrified" that blank cheques had been signed by the other trustee, and she was not about to co-sign them without Beaverbrook's instructions.

Her husband Leonard also wrote Beaverbrook, saying he thought it unacceptable for the trustees to be signing cheques every time McFadden bought five pounds of nails, and also illogical for them to be giving him signed blank cheques. In that case Beaverbrook might as well simply turn the entire fund over to McFadden. With Creaghan gone for some time, would it not be preferable to have McFadden open his own chequing account, give him a signed cheque for \$5,000 at one time, say, and when he had used it up show Kay his receipts, whereupon she could give him another cheque for \$5,000?

Beaverbrook agreed. He wrote to Kay O'Brien that he did not like the use of blank cheques but approved of "floats of \$5000." He told her to give McFadden a signed cheque for \$5000, and when he has spent that "let him show you the accounts. And, if you approve, give him another \$5000." She was not to worry any more. By this letter he absolved her

from any claim for dereliction of trust. You do what you think is right. And I give you the same freedom as if you were dealing with your own funds instead of my money.

He agreed it might have been a mistake to appoint Creaghan as a trustee. Nevertheless, he wrote, "he is a good boy." The main thing was that "we must work it out so that the Reverend Father gets what he wants and you get rid of the money and I escape the labour."

There were no further problems. Kay O'Brien later spoke highly of McFadden's "conscientious

attitude in spending money.” If there was any problem it lay in his

scaling down to keep within his budget.... Unless you could see the impoverished little University and the depressed town that is now being given this wonderful rink to lift their spirits and to restore their faith in human nature, you could not realize the magnitude and importance of this generous gift.

The Lord Beaverbrook Arena

The rink was enclosed before winter set in. On December 29, 1954, McFadden informed Beaverbrook that the windows and doors were in, the ice-making unit was installed, and the carpenters were building “a few hundred more seats for spectators,” which would give the arena more capacity than in the much more expensive Newcastle rink. He was also considering putting in a heated band room “in the hope that more young people will learn to play a musical instrument.” He told Beaverbrook that the building was well constructed. He had bought the steel for a better price from Robb Steel Works than from a company in Montreal. Besides, the Montreal steel in his opinion was too light for Miramichi winters. And when Robb Steel wanted \$4500 to erect the frame, McFadden had rented a crane and had local men do the job for less than half that amount. Proud of his penny-pinching, he listed other ways he had saved money. Jack Bowes, a local welder, had done all the welding for the service building gratis. Bill Kerr charged him only half the usual price for the use of tractors, cranes, trucks and equipment. Clyne Cassidy “blasted with dynamite” for the foundation and would not accept payment. Jack MacDonald gave them the best prices possible for cement. Also, “for various reasons,” he was able to get about half of the lumber used at just over market price. He did not mean to convey the idea that he had

taken advantage of people or run them into hard bargains – but rather I am truly happy that I was able to direct the good will that existed so that we have a fine rink – very different from the one I envisaged, adequate though it was.

It was truly impressive, and he wanted permission to name the rink “The Beaverbrook Arena.” He

expected it to be finished in a month.

Beaverbrook responded, giving McFadden permission to call the rink “The Beaverbrook Arena.” Kay O’Brien, however, thought it should be called “The *Lord* Beaverbrook Arena,” and with the approval of both McFadden and Creaghan, she so informed Beaverbrook. This, she felt, would add “distinction” to his gift to “St. Thomas College – the University of the Miramichi.” Beaverbrook, of course, agreed.

When McFadden next wrote Beaverbrook on January 24, 1955, however, the building was still not finished. Too many little things yet remained. He was, however, thankful they had decided not to use wooden roof supports, because such a rink in MacAdam had recently collapsed. Now he wanted a suitable dedication from Beaverbrook for the arena. He also wanted to know if Beaverbrook could attend the formal opening. Beaverbrook replied that he would be unable to attend the formal opening but sent along the dedication to be placed in the arena, a favorite quote of his from his good friend from earlier days, Rudyard Kipling:

The game is more than the player of the game
And the ship is more than the crew

Finally the arena was finished. In February, 1955, Kay O’Brien wrote Beaverbrook:

Your rink is open! Wide smiles grow wider, skates flash, and St. Thomas College owns one of the finest rinks in Canada. Their enthusiasm is heart-warming, and they had the luck and skill enough to win the first inter-collegiate match played on the beautiful sheet of ice. John [Creaghan] and I have tried not to bother you with details throughout the construction, and now I shall say nothing of the figures, Mr Tweedie has them all. When you come to us next autumn to honor us by being a guest here in our home you will be grateful I know with what your magnificent gift has given the boys. It is like a dream come true, and their pride in their ownership should carry them on to many victories.

The St. Thomas hockey team’s first match in the arena was indeed a 4-3 victory over UNB. In attendance was the well-known New Brunswick author and newspaper editor Stuart Trueman. In a letter to Beaverbrook he noted that this victory, the “inaugural game” for the arena, had “added to the hometown festivities.” And McFadden later informed Beaverbrook that “The Lord Beaverbrook Arena

is being used day and night as it provides recreation for many of the surrounding areas as well as for the College students and the boys from the [Air Force].” He promised to send a detailed report on the activities of the arena at the end of the season. Beaverbrook was delighted and looked forward to McFadden's report. He wrote him that he “got much satisfaction over the very low cost at which it was completed due to your brilliant exertions.”

McFadden wrote Beaverbrook in April that the arena had proven highly successful but that the “electric consumption of ice-making is costly.” He was considering having a cement floor installed so that the arena could be used for other purposes when the ice was out.

Not long after this the athletic director at St. Thomas, Vance Toner, forwarded to Beaverbrook a detailed report. The arena had been used that first year by college students for hockey, for general skating and for skating parties. It had also been used for public skating, figure skating, industrial hockey, midget hockey, bantam and pee-wee hockey, and old-timers hockey. The cadets from the nearby Air Force base used it as well. Handicapped and elderly folk had “comfortable accommodations” in the heated room in the gallery.

McFadden presented his full report on finances to the board meeting in June, 1955. The final cost of the arena was \$136,000, of which Beaverbrook's gift was \$101,000 (including interest). The remaining \$35,000 had been taken from college funds. (It would eventually be paid back by Beaverbrook.) McFadden suggested to the board that in order to get the best use out of the arena they should install a concrete floor under the ice area so it could be used year round. The estimated cost to do this was \$10,000. The board agreed with his proposal.

A year later, in 1956, the bursar, Henry McGrath, would inform the board that the cost of everything done at the arena, including the new concrete floor, was \$146,673.75. For accounting purposes, however, he had valued it at \$200,000, its replacement cost. The difference had been the result of McFadden's work in overseeing the project, securing local workers and bargaining with

suppliers.

Kay O'Brien sent Beaverbrook some clippings from the local newspapers about the use of the arena that she thought he would find "both interesting and gratifying." She remarked that "so very many in all groups enjoy the splendid rink, and I do think Father McFadden with his 'free time' built up a tremendous amount of good will in the town." After a victory by the St. Thomas hockey team over the visiting UNB team, Beaverbrook, never one to let a good opportunity to tease go by, wrote the president of UNB, Mackay, that he was "very disappointed to see that the Chatham Rink is producing better hockey players for St. Thomas than the Fredericton rink is producing for UNB." Mackay did not respond.

St. Thomas students enjoyed free entrance to all college hockey games and other activities in the arena. In 1957 McFadden recommended to the board that they provide free of charge three hundred skating hours to interested schools and

to provide coaching and direction of their teams, to sponsor their leagues and to transport the winning Miramichi teams to the various towns for the Provincial play-offs...in order to revive interest in ice activities and to instill the right principles of athletics in the youth of the district.

The board agreed, and its generosity reaped rewards. Four of those teams, at the Midget, Juvenile, Junior and Varsity level, either won or were runner-ups in the provincial championships that year.

Although the arena was well used, it was not the gold mine Kay O'Brien had predicted. It was expensive to operate and generosity had its costs. Could they generate revenue in the summer months? Attempts to introduce roller skating, although initially popular, never caught on. Henry McGrath decided that a monster bingo in the summer might be the answer. They had been successful in other parts of the province. That caught on, and the bingos became a community activity. McGrath later remembered how it happened:

We would get a group together, maybe half a dozen, and get someone as leader who would be boss. I wouldn't be. Joe Currie, the local Fire Chief was in charge. The committee organizers included firemen, the police, university staff and local supporters. We organized the whole

thing.

[For a first prize] they got a car, a new Ford, from Pat Keoughan at cost. Pat was selling cars in Chatham at the time. He gave it to us for a month or two before the bingo. We advertised first by having Willy Barry drive. Ray my brother was the announcer, and they went all over the country, I think, Northumberland County and up maybe to Bathurst. [The bingos] were packed. They'd be sitting at the doors. The first bingo we had, it started at seven o'clock and they were sitting at the rink at a little after five to get in. Oh, my God, the crowds! The big prize was the car but we had other prizes too. There wasn't a prize under \$100. We had \$200, and we had \$500, and I think we had a couple of \$1000 prizes too. We took a chance. We hadn't paid for the car, or anything, and hadn't paid any expenses. The first bingo was the one we really made a terrific profit on. We cleared over \$7,000.

The university did its banking at the Bank of Nova Scotia and we had to borrow money to pay the winners and to have change for those selling the bingos cards and so forth. The second year the bank manager, Tom Gallivan, said 'Why don't we go up and do that. We'll look after the money for them. We'll count it and bring it back to the bank.' The whole staff came up and we had no worries at all. Viola McKendy, Clair Flanagan and Marion Smith, the whole staff. They did it. They handled the money. They brought up what they needed. They counted the cash, kept track of it all. Took it down to the bank. Put it in our account. Paid off the bank loan that we had borrowed for the car and all that. We never had a worry about it.

And some of the policemen came and said we'd better have some protection up there too. We had a lot of money there. So they were around. And the firemen were there. Everyone was watching things. Everyone was careful. There never was a bit of trouble. And there wasn't a vacant spot in that rink. The bleachers were filled, and on the floor all the chairs we could borrow plus what we had ourselves. The callers were the MacDonalDs, Hector and I can't think of the other fellows' names. One was the manager of Loggie's store over there. The other fellow worked at the Customs in Chatham. They were used to doing that. They had run bingos in different places, calling and all that. But the general manager of the whole thing was Joe Currie.

No one was paid anything. The bingos went on for four or five years. But then, you see, the novelty wore off and we had had to get out of it because we thought we might get caught.

McGrath did not explain what he thought might have been illegal about it. His greatest fear was that there might have been a double winner for the big prize, and they would have had to buy a second car.

The Beaverbrook Library

While Beaverbrook was at St. Thomas getting his honorary degree he paid a visit to the library. It was a relatively small library, and being the author of several books himself Beaverbrook decided to do something to improve it. Visiting the O'Briens in Chatham in 1954, while the hockey arena was in the middle of construction, he mentioned that he would like to see a catalogue of its books. Following up on his suggestion, Kay O'Brien spoke to McFadden. He informed her that English Language and

Literature was the best collection but there were also a fair numbers of books on Religion and Philosophy. The social sciences, education and the pure sciences left “much to be desired.” Altogether the library contained some 6,000 books not including about 1,500 law books and various periodicals and miscellaneous papers.

A summary of its holdings was sent to Beaverbrook. About three weeks later, on December 9, he wrote McFadden a short note enclosing a list of books he proposed to donate to St. Thomas. “It is just the first list – others will follow,” he wrote. McFadden was to cross off the list any books not needed since “it may well be that some of the historical literature is too comprehensive for your purposes.” Shortly after this he wrote again, promising more books, but asking McFadden not to announce the gift “until after the books are delivered.”

McFadden replied a short while later that the promise of additional books for the library had “electrified the campus.” The librarian and professor of English Literature, Robert Whalen, were having a difficult time trying to decide whether or not any books should be deleted from the list. Whalen wrote McFadden that since the library holdings in “the critical and background material of English Literature are very small, I cannot honestly say, after studying the proposed list of books, that any of them could be described as unnecessary or in any sense of small value to the library.” He thought they would fit well into courses in the English department, which that semester were offering courses in the literature of the seventeenth century, the Augustan age, the Romantic age and the Victorian period. The books would “supply a need which until now has been alleviated only by inter-library loans and the meagre yearly additions to our library the budget has allowed.” Whalen suggested that some specialized reference books were not essential and could be eliminated. McFadden passed the letter on to Beaverbrook and told him the college would be “truly heartened and gladdened” to receive any of the volumes on the lists he had sent.

Beaverbrook consulted Dr. Alfred Bailey, then librarian at UNB, about books he might give to

St. Thomas, eventually receiving from him an extensive, three-part list. He also received lists of Canadian books for St. Thomas from well-known poet Fred Cogswell and Dr. Desmond Pacey of the UNB English Department. On December 18 he informed his secretary, Margaret Ince, that he had decided to give St. Thomas “five hundred or a thousand books” from the lists. He had already “pruned” Dr. Bailey's list “quite considerably.” McFadden, with Whalen's help, had also cut some books from the lists. Any duplicates in the Beaverbrook Collection at the UNB Library were to be sent to St. Thomas.

Interestingly, Beaverbrook also instructed his secretary to check the list of books that McFadden had not yet seen in order to ensure “that works on the Index are not included.” He was, of course, referring to the *Index Librorum Prohibitorum*, the list of books that Roman Catholics were forbidden to read. (The index, first published in 1559, would not be abolished until 1966 by Pope Paul VI.) The list he got back from McFadden had “already passed the test with the Holy Fathers.” Also, since St. Thomas was a Catholic institution, he asked her to consult Dr. Stanley Morison, a friend of his in London, someone knowledgeable who “would be willing to work hard for a Roman Catholic institution.” Morison, an English typographer who was presently typographical adviser to the Cambridge University Press and editor of the history of the London *Times*, was also a noted book collector.

It is equally interesting to note Beaverbrook's other reservations about education at St. Thomas.

As he wrote his secretary:

Yes, Mrs. Ince, I think I have done enough for St. Thomas but you might let me have when I go to Canada a list of the books that they wanted and did not get.... I want to give this College a good comprehensive Library with a predominately English Collection, but I do not intend to give them any books that are highly valuable in the first instance. St. Thomas is a small University that grants degrees, but the standard of education is not too high. It is entirely in the charge of Priests.

He appears to have been unaware that neither Professors Campbell nor Whalen at St. Thomas were

priests, or that Campbell had an MA and a PhD from Fordham, or that Whalen had been educated at UNB. Nevertheless, it is worth noting Beaverbrook's personal involvement in the choosing of books. Books of reference were his first priority. English literature came second. Once his secretary had decided which books to order from England, she was to buy them "if they are cheap," but if the price of a book was more than ten shillings she was to consult him. For the time being the list was limited to 600 books. "By the way," he instructed her, "I have struck out as many American works as I possibly could. I am not partial to giving them American works – some, but not too many."

In January, 1955, he asked her to contact a book seller to buy a set of *Encyclopaedia Britannica* for St. Thomas. She was to explain that it was for St. Thomas University and that he was buying it and that "I want it cheap, because it is a very small university. I do not want it for nothing, not at all, but I want it at a reasonable price." She was also to have a special bookplate printed for the books going to St. Thomas, "a Beaverbrook book plate on different lines from the one used at UNB." She did so, but he was disappointed with the samples. He instructed her to give the job instead to Michael Wardell, Editor of the Fredericton *Daily Gleaner*. The plates were to be put on when the books arrived in New Brunswick. McFadden was to be instructed "that these volumes be kept separate from other books in your Library and that they should be classified as part of the Beaverbrook Library." By May, 1955, six hundred sixty-six books had been sent to St. Thomas.

Beaverbrook also consulted Louise Manny, the Librarian of the Old Manse Library in Newcastle, his boyhood home, which he had had donated to the town. She transferred a number of books to the new Beaverbrook collection at St. Thomas's library, including a complete set of the British *Dictionary of National Biography*, books that she believed would be more suitable for a university library than a public library.

Beaverbrook would continue over the years to send books to St. Thomas. He would write letters asking if they had this or that book, and if they did not he would send them a copy. In January, 1956, he

wrote to say he was concerned that he had not received any requests for books from the St. Thomas librarian. The librarian at this time was Fr. Thomas McKendy, a liturgical scholar. Michael Nowlan, who worked under McKendy for a few years and helped him shelve some of the books in the new Beaverbrook Collection, remembers him as an exceptional mentor and a librarian ahead of his time. McFadden replied to Beaverbrook that “Fr. McKendy, I believe, thought it would be rather indelicate to request further books – keeping in mind that he had given your Lordship such a list on the occasion of your visit last fall.” McKendy subsequently wrote a letter of apology to Beaverbrook’s secretary Margaret Ince for his tardiness in answering letters and expressing the gratitude of everyone at St. Thomas for the

generous and continued interest in our Library. We are now, through Lord Beaverbrook’s kind benefaction, in possession of many important sets and individual volumes which would have been beyond our means. The Beaverbrook Library is our pride and joy. As Librarian I can vouch for the appreciation of the faculty, students and librarians.

Ince replied that if he needed any more reference books he should write Lord Beaverbrook directly. “He is most anxious for the University to have a good library. But,” she scolded him, “that requires your active cooperation.” Apparently McKendy did nothing, for a month later he received another letter from her informing him once again that

Lord Beaverbrook is keen for the College to have a good reference library. So would you let me know whether you require any more books to make up your collection of works of reference? Or are you sufficiently supplied?

McKendy got to work. Wickedly perhaps, he asked for copies of D. H. Lawrence’s essays and poems, and also George Moore’s *Evelyn Innes*, probably anticipating that the request would be denied since he would have known they were on the *Index*. He also asked for those works listed in the 1952 publication *Syntopicon: An Index to the Great Ideas* that had been crossed off the earlier lists. When these were denied, the rector, McFadden, wrote to Beaverbrook asking if he was questioning the “advisability of getting these particular books” for St. Thomas, since McKendy believed “they could be put to very

good use.” Beaverbrook, apparently more anxious to apply Catholic censorship than the Holy Fathers at St. Thomas, replied:

I do question the advisability of purchasing this series of Great Books for your library. I will get some of the individual works for you if you send me [a selection] of works in the series. But as some of the books are on the Index I do not want to send any of those books to your library.

When Beaverbrook learned in September 1957 that his friend the lawyer J. J. Fraser Winslow was moving from his home in Fredericton to smaller quarters and had no room for all his books, he asked if any of them might be suitable for St. Thomas. If so, he would be “glad to collect them from you and deliver them as a gift from you.” He added sardonically: “St. Thomas is a good institution. True it does not teach its students Episcopalianism, Presbyterianism, Predestination or Conformity. But it does turn out some good boys.” Winslow sent him a number of books, which he sent on to St. Thomas. In a letter of thanks, Beaverbrook told Winslow he was expecting a large shipment of books for St. Thomas from his friend Dr. Morison in London. “In time, amongst us,” he wrote, “we will build up a good library for that institution.”

In February, 1958, McFadden thanked Beaverbrook for getting Morison interested in their library. Two months later Morison's secretary sent McFadden a list of books that he (Morison) had given Beaverbrook for the St. Thomas library. Books continued to arrive at St. Thomas from London, and in June, 1959, Beaverbrook's secretary informed McFadden that Dr. Morison “who gave a great many books to your library” would be in Fredericton on September 15. “I am to add that he has still got a very big library.” McFadden caught on quickly and thanked her for the information. He informed her that the following year St. Thomas, “our modest Miramichi institution,” would be celebrating its golden anniversary. He wondered if it would be possible for Dr. Morison to come to Chatham to give a talk on liturgy. This would give them the opportunity “to offer an honorary degree to our distinguished visitor – as well as to any others whom Lord Beaverbrook would wish to honor.”

Shortly after this Beaverbrook informed McFadden that Dr. Morison accepts “with real pleasure

the honour you propose to confer upon him. He regards it as a distinction.” He added:

In case I have not mentioned it to you before, his honours include degrees from Oxford, Cambridge, and Birmingham, and gold medals from the Bibliographical Society in London and the American Institute of Graphic Arts. He is an Honorary Fellow of the Royal College of Art in London, the Newbury Library in Chicago, and Pierpoint Morgan Library, New York.

At the bottom of the letter he added: “You might wish to consider making him [an honorary] Doctor of Divinity.” McFadden was only too happy to comply.

At about the same time, Beaverbrook also became interested in erecting a statue of St. Thomas Aquinas “in New Brunswick,” presumably at St. Thomas. He wrote the Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies in Toronto several letters between June and October, 1959. In his first letter he informed the Director of the Institute that since there were “many versions” of the saint's likeness, he would like to conform “to the Canadian practice.” He wanted to know where in Canada “there is in existence a statue of the Saint so that I may study it.” He was informed that there was “no ‘properly’ Canadian design for the subject,” but they would try to find more information for him. Beaverbrook appears still to have been pursuing his idea in October, although he does not appear in the end to have done anything about it. At the time, he was hearing rumours that St. Thomas might establish a presence on the UNB campus, so perhaps he was thinking of providing a statue for the new location. Oddly, no one seems to have remembered the statue of Aquinas that Bishop Barry had commissioned, erected, and blessed at St. Thomas College in 1910.

St. Thomas Solvent but Insecure

When the board met in June 1955, the rector was happy to report that, according to the bishop, St. Thomas would be receiving \$50,000 from the financial drive. This was in addition to the \$42,000 received over the last two years. During the previous year the college had also received some \$22,000 from government grants and bequests. Most heartening of all had been Beaverbrook's munificence in

the form of the new Lord Beaverbrook Arena and the Beaverbrook Collection for the library. St. Thomas, it seemed, had finally become solvent.

Yet its future was uncertain. In spite of the college's recent successes, the supportive community, its strengthened faculty, and full enrolment, some fundamental, inter-connected issues remained unresolved.

At the board meeting in 1955, members tentatively broached some of those issues. Was the board, one member asked, looking at Catholic education “in the correct light”? St. Thomas was the only English-speaking Catholic college in New Brunswick, yet UNB enrolled a large number of English-speaking Catholics. Rector McFadden suggested that perhaps the college was “not fulfilling the function given it by Divine Providence.” Perhaps some sort of agreement should be negotiated with UNB to look after the Catholic students. Might it not be wise meanwhile for the bishop to ask other bishops to share “the burden of providing Christian education for the English-speaking Catholics of the Province”? This was a delicate but long-standing issue. It had come up many times before, notably in discussions the previous decade between the rector and the bishops of Bathurst and Saint John. Those discussions had failed to produce any agreement that the two dioceses would work together to improve higher education for English-speaking Catholics. Did the chancellor have any suggestions about resolving that issue?

The bishop must have been embarrassed by the question. Unknown to everyone else at the table, as we have noted previously, a move was afoot to transfer Chatham and the rest of the English-speaking areas of the Bathurst diocese to the diocese of Saint John. It was part of a general reorganization of the affairs of the Catholic church in New Brunswick that would create francophone dioceses located in Edmundston, Bathurst and Moncton, and a single anglophone diocese located in Saint John. The linguistic controversies of the previous half-century had so poisoned the well that, in the minds of the authorities, separation was the only way to achieve peace. The person charged with

carrying out the anglophone aspect of the reorganization was the new (anglophone) bishop of Saint John, Alfred Leverman, originally from Newfoundland, who had replaced Bishop Bray after his death in June of 1953. Yet, by protocol, such a diocesan boundary change had to be kept a tight secret until it was finally approved by the Vatican. (It would only be approved and made public in 1959.) LeBlanc knew that such a change would see him replaced as St. Thomas's chancellor by the Bishop of Saint John. That would change St. Thomas's situation, especially in light of the interest shown by the previous bishop of Saint John in establishing a Catholic college in his city. No doubt feeling somewhat hot under his collar, LeBlanc said that he approved of the matter “whole-heartedly” and would “bring this important matter up with other Bishops in the Province.” He then informed the board that he had to leave for another engagement in Moncton, but that they should continue the meeting without him. We can appreciate the relief he must have felt at the excuse to leave.

After the bishop left, the board expressed its “great appreciation of the warmth of his Excellency’s understanding of the problems of [St. Thomas] in its capacity as the only English-speaking higher educational organization in the province, which unique position caused the Board great concern – not only in matters of education but of finance, and particularly as regards the future as to its aims and responsibilities.” With hindsight the resolution was deeply ironic. LeBlanc indeed understood the problems facing St. Thomas, better than the rest of his board, yet he was not at liberty to talk about them. For the moment the members, besides noting its concerns, could do little but wait to see what would emerge from his talks with “the other bishops.”

Beaverbrook Scholarships

Meanwhile, academic life went on as usual for St. Thomas's students. Some of them were outstanding students, but often coming from poor families they had little chance to pursue their education. Beaverbrook in his concern to extend his help to his fellow Tommies (he was, after all, an

honorary member of the class of '54) attempted some remedies. For a number of years he had had been providing scholarships for undergraduates and graduate students at UNB. In 1955 he decided to open these scholarships to all university students in New Brunswick, including those at St. Thomas, along with Mount Allison, Saint-Joseph, Saint-Louis, and Collège du Sacré Coeur. Colin Mackay, president of UNB, objected. The three smallest universities, meaning the Catholic ones, he said did not “have the standards” necessary to be members of the National Conference of Canadian Universities [NCCU], the closest thing to a university accreditation body in Canada. None of the three had in fact applied for membership in the NCCU.

Beaverbrook, as usual, paid little attention to such objections. As he wrote McFadden, he had “a deep interest in St. Thomas” and wanted “to see it develop.” He was “anxious to get graduates from the College over here at London University,” because he felt “it would help the morale at home.” But he cautioned McFadden that he “should send us real good men.” He had been concerned about one St. Thomas student who was not doing well, although a year later he was full of praise for the same student who had settled in and was now getting excellent reports from his graduate supervisor. And over the years a number of St. Thomas graduates (including William Spray) would take advantage of the opportunity to study in London. Even more undergraduates benefited from “Lord Beaverbrook Undergraduate Scholarships” when Beaverbrook opened them to St. Thomas students. He also made available other special scholarships to St. Thomas graduates. In 1957, for example, McFadden would thank Beaverbrook for making it possible for three teachers, graduates of St. Thomas, to pursue educational studies in England the following year: David Hunt, his wife Marion Rockcliffe, and Lawrence Desmond. He would also mention Leonard Doucet, presently pursuing his doctorate at Brown University in Rhode Island, who had benefited from his graduate studies in London with a Beaverbrook scholarship. And in 1958, McFadden would write to Beaverbrook of the pleasure it gave him to report that 1950 St. Thomas graduate Daniel Hurley, who had been recently receiving a

Beaverbrook scholarship to study at the UNB Law School, had been selected to study abroad with the help of another Beaverbrook scholarship.

With the dedication of its priests and its fastidious rector, and especially with Beaverbrook's personal care and concern, St. Thomas by the mid-1950s seemed to have turned the corner, both financially and academically. Chatham could boast of its own "St. Thomas College – the University on the Miramichi." Yet, several issues remained unresolved, issues that affected the very future of St. Thomas and indeed the intellectual life of the Miramichi itself. Some sort of resolution had to be found, no matter how painful. St. Thomas was entering a difficult period as it approached the fiftieth anniversary of its establishment under that name.

Bathurst Diocese vs Saint John Diocese

The Beaverbrook bequests by way of the new arena, library additions, and student scholarships gave a strong forward momentum to St. Thomas. In 1955 and 1956, McFadden and his board members in Chatham were contemplating the construction of some new buildings on the campus to meet growing needs. Thanks to the bishop's fund-raising campaign, the government grants that McFadden had secured, and some other bequests, building funds were finally available. McFadden intended to present specific building plans to the meeting of his board planned for June 20th, 1956. Bishop LeBlanc, however, having in mind long-standing but hitherto secret negotiations with Bishop Leverman of Saint John concerning the redrawing of the boundaries of the two dioceses, was reluctant to allow the rector to go ahead with presenting any building plans. On June 8 he wrote McFadden that "the more I reflect on the matter the less I am of opinion that we should build this year." The cost of building materials were high, he said, and many things were simply not available. The major reason, however, was that until they had "a definite light thrown on any possible project in the Saint John Diocese" they should not proceed.

“Any possible project” in reality included plans to transfer Chatham and other English-speaking areas of the Bathurst diocese to the Saint John diocese, although neither the rector nor the members of his board at St. Thomas were aware of it. It was not a new idea. Such a possibility had arisen fifty years earlier, as we saw in Chapter 2, when St. Thomas's founder Bishop Thomas Barry had attempted unsuccessfully to arrange with the Vatican for a redrawing of provincial Diocesan boundaries so as to separate Chatham and other English-speaking areas from the French-speaking areas around Bathurst and further north. When Patrick Bray, bishop of Saint John, died in 1953, he had been replaced as bishop by Alfred Leverman in September of that year. Leverman, born in St. John's, Newfoundland, at the time of his appointment had been Auxiliary Bishop of Halifax. Almost immediately Leverman had been involved in negotiations to redraw the boundaries of the two Catholic dioceses of Bathurst and Saint John. The consequences for St. Thomas itself were major. If Chatham were transferred from Bathurst to Saint John, the chancellorship at St. Thomas would similarly be transferred from LeBlanc to Leverman, since by tradition (though not legislation) the diocesan bishop was the college's chancellor. The negotiations, which would be conducted in secret for the next six years, involved the bishop of Saint John (Leverman), the Pope (represented by the Apostolic Delegate in Ottawa), and the bishop of Bathurst (LeBlanc).

In a letter dated February 24, 1955, Leverman explained his involvement to the new Apostolic Delegate “for his consideration” concerning “a matter which may have considerable consequences for the spiritual and temporal welfare” of his Saint John diocese. According to Leverman, he attended the annual meeting of Catholic bishops in Ottawa in 1953 one month after he was installed as Bishop of Saint John. He was given “very explicit instructions” by the Delegate's predecessor about “the welfare of his Diocese.”

I was told that the County of Northumberland would be restored to this Diocese. This meant that the English-speaking College of St. Thomas in Chatham, together with some twelve English-speaking parishes along the Miramichi River, would come into the Diocese of Saint

John. This would give a College to the Diocese and increase the number of souls, all thereby giving the Diocese greater prestige and better standing in the Province.

He was told that to achieve this transfer he need speak only to the Metropolitan (the archbishop of Moncton) and Bishop LeBlanc of Bathurst. Since that time he had consulted the Metropolitan, who had said he was not opposed to the change “if the Bishop of the territory concerned were willing.”

Leverman had also contacted LeBlanc and told him what had gone on at the bishops’ conference, suggesting they meet with the archbishop to discuss the matter further. He was, he wrote, “embarrassed to say the least” to discover that the Bishop of Bathurst knew nothing about the proposed changes.

Leverman explained to the Apostolic Delegate that LeBlanc had written him back two weeks later, on November 17, 1953, to say he was welcome to come to see him to discuss the matter. It was “a question,” LeBlanc had written to Leverman, “that has been agitated quietly in some aspect or other, and if an amicable solution can be brought out for the good of souls so much the better.” Yet the meeting, wrote Leverman, never took place. It was now a year and a half later and Bishop Leverman was getting impatient, wondering why he had heard nothing. He was writing the new Apostolic Delegate for information and advice. He would like to know if “the planned takeover” of the Miramichi region was “possible” since it would certainly have “a great effect upon any policy in education planned and carried out here in the Diocese of Saint John.”

Leverman in his letter to the Delegate went on to say that it had been clear to him from his arrival in Saint John that it “needed something in the name of higher learning besides the High School and facilities attainable by many who are afraid and unable to bear the expense of traveling to College to get a finished education.” He had been approached “by various groups” who believed that “at least a Junior College should be in the vicinity,” for it would “lift up the tone of education in this area, and it is needed.” He referred to the time a century earlier when there was only one diocese in the province with Saint John as its See. “Much was taken from this Diocese years ago, and it has not been to its

betterment.” Thereupon he proceeded to give the Delegate a short history of higher education in the Saint John diocese. He pointed out that Bishop Sweeney had established the College of St. Joseph at Memramcook in 1864. It was a bilingual institution and important to the whole region. In 1936 the Saint John diocese, however, had been divided and St. Joseph’s had been included in the Archdiocese of Moncton and “was considered a French-speaking College.” English-speaking Catholic students had begun going to other universities, some to StFX and some to St. Thomas. Considering the small number of Catholics in his diocese as well as the decline in revenues, Leverman felt that another full university was impractical. The Diocese of Saint John had a fine new high school, but it might benefit from a junior college.

Between 1953 and 1955, Leverman became better acquainted with St. Thomas and with Bishop LeBlanc. In April, 1954, he accepted Leblanc's invitation to stand in for him St. Thomas's spring Convocation, which the latter had been unable to attend. In March of the following year he wrote LeBlanc to say he would be passing through Chatham on his way back from Montreal and would appreciate the opportunity to visit the St. John students attending St. Thomas, “if your Excellency has no objection.” He pointed out that “it is the only way I can contact my own students, not having a college in the Diocese.” LeBlanc responded warmly: “Anytime you feel to make a diversion in your activities and wish to make a visit to St. Thomas College you are most welcome and the doors of the Bishop’s house are always wide open. Feel free to come as often as you wish and see your spiritual children at St. Thomas College.”

Thus on June 8, 1956, when LeBlanc told McFadden to hold off on plans for new buildings at St. Thomas until they had “a definite light thrown on any possible project in the Saint John Diocese,” he was being somewhat disingenuous. Unaware of the plans afoot to transfer St. Thomas to the Saint John diocese, however, McFadden innocently responded by suggesting that the bishop contact the Bishop of Saint John to find out what plans, if any, were afoot for a new Catholic post-secondary

educational institution in the Saint John diocese. Somewhat relieved, LeBlanc wrote Leverman immediately saying he had been “prompted and urged” to do so by McFadden. The matter under discussion, he explained, had been coming up again and again over the past several years. St. Thomas was overcrowded and wanted to expand but did not “dare do so” unless there was no possibility the Saint John diocese would establish a college of its own. “Only one college in New Brunswick for the English-speaking Catholics can exist,” wrote Bishop LeBlanc, reflecting the consensus reached years earlier. He explained to Bishop Leverman the discussions with Bishop Bray in 1946 and 1948, after which Bray had informed them that, while no decision had been made at that time to establish a Catholic college in Saint John, the diocese reserved the right to establish such a college “should the project at any time be judged feasible.” Now he would like a clear answer from Leverman:

If you answer me that you do think of building in Saint John Diocese some kind of college, then I shall be able to declare [so] to the Board of Governors of St. Thomas University at their meeting on June 19.

LeBlanc wanted a commitment, or if that was not possible,

whatever you can divulge, and I shall be pleased and satisfied. After all I have no right to intrude in your projects... and I have even gone much too far. But I know you realize my position and difficulty. Answer what you can say at present and it will be FINIS.

Indeed, LeBlanc was in a difficult position. He was aware of the plans to transfer Chatham with St. Thomas to the Diocese of Saint John, but also aware that, given the church's predilection for secrecy, the plans had to be kept secret until Rome approved. (Final approval would only come three years later, in 1959.) Knowing his response would be read out to the board at St. Thomas, Leverman was suitably evasive in his reply of June 11. A definitive answer, he wrote, would be extremely difficult. All he could do was to repeat that the Diocese of Saint John “reserved its right to establish an institution of higher learning, should at any time the project be judged feasible and advisable.” He had not been in Saint John for long and wanted to proceed slowly. When he had arrived in 1953, he wrote, the idea of another college of any type seemed to be out of the question. His major problem had been to

provide for primary education. Now, however, “the picture has changed considerably.” Such an initiative, it appeared,

would be welcome, not only to the people but to the other Universities extant in the Maritimes. The rapid progress of education and the pressure put upon the Universities made the possible expansion in this area welcome to them.

He was not interested in competition but rather in “filling in and co-operating with the already existing institutions.” He wrote that he understood LeBlanc's hesitation in raising the matter, but he also hoped LeBlanc might have noticed that he, Leverman, had “kept severely away from St. Thomas for fear that I might even give the impression of interfering in another Diocese.... In the event of making [such] a move,” he continued, he “would certainly involve St. Thomas. They would be the most affected. I would not like to do anything that might militate against it.”

Indeed, aware as we are but no one at the time on St. Thomas's board besides the chancellor was, once Chatham would be transferred to the Saint John diocese the Bishop of Saint John would not be “interfering in another Diocese” since it would then be his own diocese. Even so, taking over the running of St. Thomas would not necessarily preclude setting up some sort of junior college in Saint John. Bishop Leverman asked Bishop LeBlanc to give Rector McFadden permission to discuss the problem with him, since “the question of expansion must be considered with a view to the area of Saint John.”

The Board Contemplates New Buildings

The board met as scheduled on June 20 (not the 19th, as LeBlanc had written to Leverman), 1956. The first item of business, before the bishop could start discussion of the issues outlined in Leverman's letter, was the college's financial situation. The rector reported that the rink had been completed with the addition of a concrete floor and the total cost had reached \$150,000. Beaverbrook had given a total of \$126,000, including interest. The balance of \$24,000 had been taken from college

funds. A considerable amount had been spent on improvements, particularly to the high school buildings and the refurbished war-time H-huts. Outstanding accounts due to the university by students amounted to \$17,000: \$9,000 from university students and \$8,000 from high school students. McFadden expected to collect a large part of that during the summer after the students had a chance to earn some money. The university had capital reserves of about \$150,000.

This brought up the need for new quarters for the High School. The bursar, Fr. Henry McGrath, pointed out that major repairs would soon be required with a cost probably “in excess of what seemed prudent to expend on these old buildings.” The heating equipment was wearing out and causing problems. The company that provided the original furnaces had gone out of business, so they would have to purchase expensive new ones. The college was presently undertaking a major repair job on the walls of the administration building that would cost about \$10,000. Some board members were in favour of putting up a new building for the High School. The bursar, McGrath, who also happened to belong to the executive of the St. Thomas Alumni Association, indicated that the alumni were becoming increasingly keen to support the college and were particularly interested in seeing the construction of a new, separate chapel building for the campus. The bishop suggested all such plans be put on hold for the time being.

In the meantime, the bishop was at least willing to consider raising the salaries of the college's teaching priests. They had last been increased in 1944 when Bishop LeBlanc had decided upon a new salary structure. After many years without change, some board members at the meeting suggested they should be improved. This time LeBlanc decided to entrust recommendations to a committee consisting of the rector, the bursar, and board member Fr. Hickey. The committee would meet and submit its recommendation to McFadden, who would forward it to the bishop. The old salary scale had been \$300, \$400, and \$600 a year, depending on the length of time taught at the college. The committee, in an odd reversal of the seniority principle, was recommending that every teaching priest be paid a basic

rate of \$600 a year (which of course meant that the longest-serving faculty would receive no raise). On November 9, 1956, LeBlanc would inform McFadden that he had held off determining the new salaries for faculty until he had settled on new salaries for assistants in the parishes, adding: “of course we will never be able to pay adequate salary especially for the older professors but we could at least be reasonable.” He was therefore accepting the recommendation of the committee, for \$600 a year for all. He was also raising the rector's salary from \$800 to \$1,000 a year. The raises would mean an increase of \$2,700 a year in total salaries. “I repeat again,” he added, “that the salary, even if increased to the above amount, is still ridiculous but we cannot do better.” The bishop proposed to make the changes retroactive to September, “and I am sure that your professors would be pleased.”

Finally, at the same June 1956 board meeting, after the discussion of finances, buildings, and salaries, the bishop finally tossed in his bombshell. He reminded the members of the board's suggestion at the previous year's meeting that he talk to the other bishops, since construction of additional buildings would necessarily be linked to “the question of the plans of the other Bishops of the Province with respect to higher education for students of their respective dioceses.” He informed the board of (part of) his correspondence with Leverman. He reminded those who had not been on the board in the 1940s of the previous discussions about establishing a Catholic “college” in Saint John, including the conclusions of the shelved Deferrari report. Nothing had come of it then, but in the letter he had just received he reported that Leverman was suggesting that “with changes that had come about in the last ten years, it seemed that another Catholic University might be feasible now.”

His remarks must have sent a cold shiver around the members at the board table. The hopefulness introduced by the Beaverbrook Convocation two and a half years earlier and enhanced in the years since by the building and opening of the Beaverbrook Arena, the Beaverbrook Library, and the Beaverbrook Scholarships, not to mention the growing support for the college and confidence in its future by its loyal alumni, were all founded on the assumption that St. Thomas was going to continue to

flourish as the province's sole English-speaking Catholic post-secondary educational institution. The idea of “another Catholic university” in the Saint John diocese (meaning in Saint John or Fredericton) was an old ghost brought back to life. The members did not need to know of the two bishops' secret plan to transfer Chatham and St. Thomas to the Saint John diocese in order to understand the threat to their institution. That would only make it worse. But the bishop was not the only one at the meeting who held an unexploded bombshell. The rector, too, had yet to reveal the contents of his recent correspondence with the president of UNB.

Sources, Chapter 5

For the material in this chapter, extensive use was made of the written correspondence of Bishop Camille LeBlanc, Bishop Patrick Bray, Bishop Alfred Leverman, and Fr. Lynn McFadden, as noted in the quoted passages. Much of their correspondence is located in the archives of the Diocese of Saint John [ADSJ]; copies of some of it is located in the relevant funds of the Provincial Archives of New Brunswick [PANB]. Use was also made of Lord Beaverbrook's correspondence [?-also located in PANB?], as well as that of Kay and Leonard O'Brien [also located in PANB?]

Other sources used were:

Minutes of the Board of St. Thomas University, 1948-1955

St. Thomas College Calendars (various years)

The Aquinian 1948-1955

Contemporary accounts in the following newspapers:

The *Union Advocate*, a Chatham newspaper

The *Chatham Gazette*

The *New Freeman*, a Saint John newspaper

The *Saint John Telegraph*

The *Fredericton Daily Gleaner*

Personal interviews with the following persons:

Fr. Henry McGrath

Michael O. Nowlan

David Adams Richards's *Lord Beaverbrook* (Toronto: Penguin Canada, 2008) is a brief and breezy but highly sympathetic summary of "the Beaver's" career as told by a fellow Miramichier.

Much useful biographical information about people who lived in the Miramichi area can be found in W.D.Hamilton, *Dictionary of Miramichi Biography*. Saint John, 1997.

Other useful biographical information can be found in the Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online:

www.biographi.ca/index-e.html