

CHAPTER 6

UNCERTAIN FUTURE: ST. THOMAS 1956-1960

Unresolved Issues

From this point onward, other underlying and unresolved issues affecting the future, including the location, of St. Thomas rose to the surface, demanding resolution. The first concerned the awkward position of an English-speaking Catholic college (St. Thomas) in an English-speaking community (Chatham) situated since 1938 within a diocese (Bathurst) centred on a French-speaking community and headed by an Acadian bishop (LeBlanc) who happened to be the chancellor not only of St. Thomas but also of a French-speaking Catholic college (Collège du Sacré-Coeur) in the same diocese. The second underlying issue was the strained relationship between the dioceses of Bathurst and Saint John regarding the education of Catholic youth. When Bishop Bray had raised the possibility of establishing some sort of postsecondary educational institution for Catholics in his Saint John diocese, affiliated either with UNB or with St. Francis Xavier University (StFX) in Nova Scotia, he pointedly ignored St. Thomas. Although nothing came of the idea, the notion remained alive in some minds. Since many of St. Thomas's students were from Saint John, such an establishment would surely reduce enrolment at St. Thomas. The third issue concerned St. Thomas's relationship with UNB. As board members noted at the meeting in 1955, more Catholic students were enrolled at UNB than at St. Thomas. If Catholic St. Thomas were somehow to affiliate with non-denominational (some said overtly Protestant) UNB, it might help resolve the problem of supporting those Catholic students

The fourth operative issue concerned Lord Beaverbrook. With his philanthropic support for St.

Thomas on the Miramichi, his close relationship with UNB's president, his inordinate political influence, not to mention his desire to have things his way, his preferences for St. Thomas's future could not be ignored.

That left a fifth, and as it turned out the most important, issue: the relationship between St. Thomas and the Chatham community. Ever since Bishop Rogers, nearly a century earlier, promoted the idea of a Catholic college in Chatham, English speakers in the area had become deeply attached to St. Thomas. Support since the war by St. Thomas alumni was strong and growing stronger. Would moving some of the college's operations to Fredericton not be seen as a betrayal of Chatham loyalties, even if its high school program and a year or two of its postsecondary program remained in Chatham?

Any changes to the Chatham campus, therefore, depended on resolving these issues. Unfortunately, St. Thomas's board members were often kept in the dark. Quite besides the fact that the two men in charge of running the college—Bishop LeBlanc and Rector McFadden—were temperamentally inclined to act on their own without consulting others, even each other, resolution of the first two fundamental issues affecting St. Thomas—the position of Chatham within a French-speaking diocese and the relationship between the dioceses of Bathurst and Saint John—lay within the purview of the Church and depended entirely upon its decisions. The third underlying issue—the relationship between St. Thomas and UNB—was related to the first two because the president of UNB, Mackay, fretted about the large number of Catholics taking courses there. In 1955, for example, he informed Beaverbrook that he would like the New Brunswick Teachers' College to be affiliated with the university. They “had not been able to make much headway for years,” apparently because such affiliation was opposed by some government officials. Part of the problem was that UNB was seen by many as a Protestant university, whereas many of the students at Teachers' College were Catholic. Despite that opposition, however, Mackay told Beaverbrook that Premier Flemming was “strongly in favour.” He suggested that if Beaverbrook would write the premier, it “might speed things up.” Mackay

was probably not aware that in writing to Beaverbrook about UNB's Catholic students, he was touching on the issue of St. Thomas and its position in the province's educational framework. He may not have known of Beaverbrook's financial support for St. Thomas after receiving his honorary degree in 1953. In any event, he was surprised by Beaverbrook's response that he might be willing to build a Catholic residence, affiliated with St. Thomas, on the UNB campus.

Two of these crucial issues therefore appeared to be approaching resolution when St. Thomas's board met on June 20, 1956. The rector read out a letter he had received from the president of UNB dated the previous April 30 about the possible construction of a building on the UNB campus for St. Thomas. According to Mackay, Beaverbrook was considering paying for it but asked that St. Thomas be consulted. McFadden explained for the members the background to this startling development. Since the fall semester in 1955 St. Thomas had been offering the first year of an engineering program involving mathematics and science courses. Two months previous, in early April, reported McFadden, he and the new librarian, Fr. Thomas McKendy, had visited Fredericton to discuss the possibility of students who had taken these courses transferring into the second year of the engineering program at UNB. They met with Mackay and Edith McLeod, UNB registrar. Mackay's letter of April 30 was a follow-up to that meeting. Mackay wrote that while they did not want to "cause hardships for any students coming to UNB from St. Thomas," they were "most anxious that they should not enter upon work in advance of what they might be expected to handle." McLeod would consult McFadden concerning applications from St. Thomas students. In that way UNB "could be guided by your opinion as to whether such students should enter second or first year of Engineering." Students wishing to study science at UNB would also be considered.

The matter had not ended there, continued McFadden. Mackay went on to write that "from time to time in the past there has been the suggestion that UNB and St. Thomas might work out some kind of affiliated association similar to that of St. Michael's College and the University of Toronto." He had

discussed the idea generally with Lord Beaverbrook, who had said he would be willing to help with “arranging for a university building in Fredericton if St. Thomas were interested in such a proposal.” Mackay added that he would “do anything possible to work out any arrangement that might meet with the wishes of St. Thomas.” He had not studied in detail the arrangement at the University of Toronto, but in general it seemed to provide many advantages, especially in preventing duplication of costly equipment needed for work in the pure and applied sciences. There was “lots of space at UNB and we could provide a suitable site.” He expressed his willingness to discuss this further with McFadden at any time. He concluded, “His Lordship appeared to be most interested in such a proposal and certainly his enthusiasm and help would be of great assistance in any such plan.”

McFadden relayed to the board his reply of May 8 to Mackay. Concerning the idea of a possible institutional affiliation, McFadden pointed out to Mackay some important reservations, referring to what was mentioned above as the fifth crucial issue affecting St. Thomas’s future:

Should St. Thomas remain also on the Miramichi as a junior college? Poor as we are, we yet represent great sacrifice on the part of thousands of people for more than a generation. Most of these people would have to be “educated” to this idea of affiliation. And this may take a long time.

He was, he continued, not “taking a negative attitude,” but affiliation needed to be studied carefully “to see whether it is best for the greatest number in the Province. If this is the case we must work to bring it about.” Although Mackay had marked his letter “personal,” McFadden assumed he was at liberty to discuss it with his board and with senior members of faculty; in other words, with “those who could help make the plan possible.”

Mackay replied immediately in a letter dated May 10. He appreciated “the view that St. Thomas should remain on the Miramichi as a Junior College. I have always felt that you would want to have such an arrangement.” UNB senate minutes show that on May 16 President Mackay informed his senate what was going on. He said, stretching the point somewhat, that Beaverbrook indicated he might

be interested “in helping with the financing of a plan whereby St. Thomas College might be moved to the Campus of the University of New Brunswick.” He told senate he had held preliminary discussions with the rector of St. Thomas, and that the two expected to have further discussions during the summer. The senate authorized him to proceed with these discussions.

Although Mackay asked the senators to keep the matter confidential “in these early stages,” the cat was out of the bag. What previously was circulating as rumour was now public: St. Thomas was on the operating table. Initial reaction, however, was not entirely unfavourable. On May 24 Mackay received a letter from John T. Carvell, former St. Thomas student, and now a Moncton lawyer and head of the St. Thomas Alumni Association. At their annual meeting a few days earlier, the association passed a resolution calling for “immediate action toward the expansion and the improvement of existing facilities” at St. Thomas. The executive felt that St. Thomas should expand to become “a first-class institution affording higher education to the English-speaking Catholics of the whole Province.” Since they doubted “the feasibility of another UNB on the Miramichi,” however, the alumni “gave preference to the idea of establishing our College on your campus.” It was clear that problems both “Ecclesiastical and Financial” remained to be solved before this could be accomplished. St. Thomas was “the organ of the Bishopric of Bathurst.” Although its arts courses were originally intended for pre-seminarians, the alumni association was in favour of “an institution for the higher education of the Catholic laity.” Carvell recognized that the 75,000 English-speaking Catholics in New Brunswick would need to approve such a move, as would the bishops of Bathurst, Edmundston, and Saint John. He thought the bishops might be cautious, “fearing it will not promote vocations and pre-seminary studies.” Nevertheless, Carvell suggested, they might be receptive to some sort of compromise whereby colleges in certain localities, such as St. Thomas if it were situated on the UNB campus, could offer non-denominational arts courses in philosophy. Carvell found Beaverbrook’s support encouraging and hoped that “the popular support of the laity will overcome all difficulties.” He asked Mackay to keep

his letter private, except for Mackay's close associates, until specific plans became public.

Carvell had relayed this correspondence to McFadden. The rector by way of concluding his startling report in turn now relayed it to his board at the meeting on June 20, 1956. For his part, Bishop LeBlanc relayed the unsettling news that the bishop of Saint John was again thinking of establishing a competitor to St. Thomas in his city, although he still refrained from informing the members about the impending diocesan transfer from Bathurst to Saint John.

Following these revelations, the members of the St. Thomas board began a lengthy discussion. Some were particularly interested in Beaverbrook's offer. Leonard O'Brien suggested that "since Lord Beaverbrook had been kind and thoughtful enough to extend this offer to St. Thomas in particular, it would be more than wise to investigate the matter, to find out just what his Lordship had in mind when he made the suggestion." He urged the rector to "ascertain from the UNB President what was behind this offer." Fr. Arthur Scott, who had often expressed his belief that St. Thomas would sooner or later have to become affiliated with UNB, voiced concerns about changes that might have to be made to the curriculum in that event. He also pointed to problems that were bound to result from the establishment of a new Catholic college in the Saint John diocese. In his view, St. Thomas should continue as an educational institution "with special emphasis on the classical course." The bishop, as before, must have been uncomfortable with the discussion. He could not talk about the ongoing plans to transfer Chatham and St. Thomas to the diocese of Saint John or the subsequent transfer of the college's chancellorship from him to Bishop Leverman. He could only hold his tongue when plans were discussed for new buildings for St. Thomas, either in Chatham or Fredericton. His priorities lay in making improvements to the Collège du Sacré Coeur in Bathurst, of which he was and would remain chancellor.

Thus, by the mid-1950s, discussion of affiliating St. Thomas with UNB had emerged into the public sphere. It presented those responsible for running St. Thomas with a dilemma. The Miramichi

was the institution's ancestral home, yet the requirements of educational modernization as well as regional politics were forcing them to contemplate tearing the fabric that tied them there. Whether it would involve relocating to Fredericton in whole or in part was up in the air. The next decade would demonstrate dramatically how difficult an issue it was. The major players showed their colours: UNB President Mackay, who was keen for complete relocation; Leverman, the bishop of Saint John, who wanted something for Catholic students in his home city and who knew—although he could not yet tell anyone—that he would have the deciding voice as St. Thomas's new chancellor; the Chatham community, which would come to oppose losing "their" college to the provincial capital; and not least the rector of St. Thomas, McFadden, who would be caught in the middle of a fight not of his choosing.

St. Thomas and StFX

Four days after the board meeting, on June 24, 1956, Fr. Arthur Scott died of a heart attack, aged forty-five. It was a major blow to the St. Thomas community: his fellow teaching priests, his students, and especially to McFadden, who from the time of his first appointment as rector had relied on Scott's support and advice. Scott had also taught virtually all the philosophy courses at the university and it fell to the rector to find a suitable replacement as soon as possible. It led to an unexpected possible solution to St. Thomas's most pressing problems.

In his search, McFadden wrote for suggestions to Msgr. Hugh Somers, president of StFX in Antigonish, Nova Scotia. At the same time he inquired about the possibility of having science students from St. Thomas accepted into the second-year engineering program at StFX. Somers responded immediately with some names of possible philosophy teachers. He also informed McFadden that the university's Committee of Studies had agreed in principle to his request that StFX accept St. Thomas students into engineering provided they had completed first-year English, physics, chemistry, mathematics I and II, and religion, and provided that a representative from St. Thomas consult with the

professors at StFX about details of the courses to ensure they were similar. McFadden wrote back on July 10 suggesting that he and one of the professors from St. Thomas should visit StFX during the summer to discuss the courses. He also enclosed material on the science offerings at St. Thomas.

Before such a visit could take place, however, Somers got wind of the plans for a possible affiliation of St. Thomas with UNB. In a letter dated July 23, 1956, he said he was prompted to write “by the reports of a proposal of a merger [with] UNB.” He thought that if there was any basis for consideration of a union with UNB, then “this would be the opportune time to place before you an alternative proposal—that of a much closer relationship between St. Thomas and StFX.” He did not want to complicate things for McFadden, understanding “the physical strain and mental tension involved in making any major decision, particularly true when the future of St. Thomas and the constituency it serves would depend on any course of action you may decide to adopt.”

The idea of affiliation with St. Thomas obviously excited Somers. In the same letter he expressed his hope that they would be able to get together by themselves or with some associates to discuss an arrangement whereby students could take the first two years at St. Thomas and the rest at StFX. Somers was thinking “particularly of vocations.” He felt the arrangement might be a way of encouraging more students to go on to seminary and return as priests. He went so far as to make concrete suggestions “as a working basis and subject to mutual negotiations,” namely:

1. Representatives from St. Thomas would be appointed to the StFX Board of Governors and the University Council. This would keep them in touch with developments at StFX and allow them to propose matters concerning the same at St. Thomas. The Council could establish common academic standards.
2. As was the case concerning the faculty of Xavier Junior College in Sydney, Nova Scotia, St. Thomas faculty would also be considered members of the StFX faculty and could take part and vote in all meetings and suggest any proposals they wished at any time.
3. It would be useful to have some members of the St. Thomas faculty come to teach in Antigonish. Among other things it would allow St. Thomas to keep in touch with transfer students from St. Thomas.
4. If Fr. McFadden and his bishop were in favour, StFX would be willing to provide St. Thomas with some of its faculty to repay the debt.

The relationship, Somers suggested, could run on a trial basis for five or perhaps ten years. He was convinced that such an agreement would be to the mutual advantage not only of both colleges but also of both dioceses, for it would serve to bring the clergy and the people of the two dioceses closer together. He did not think the issue of provincial responsibility for education would be an insurmountable problem as both universities were subject to direction from the Roman Catholic Church.

He went on to describe recent developments at StFX, particularly in the sciences where they had “embarked on a very ambitious program.” They were doing so because “we need Catholic scientists and engineers educated in a Catholic environment.” The two institutions together could “provide an education equal, if not better, to that which students could obtain at any other institution.” Such an arrangement would save St. Thomas a great deal of money for staff and equipment, and would guarantee St. Thomas students “a Catholic atmosphere” in which to continue their education. The most important benefit, wrote Somers, would be to Catholic education. The Catholic population in any one diocese of the region was not wealthy enough to provide first-class facilities. An arrangement such as this “could save Catholic education” in the Maritimes. Otherwise, the increasing costs of education would see “one after another of our institutions absorbed by state universities, or give an education not good enough to meet the needs of our day.” The Catholic Church would lose its influence if this happened because parents would send their children to state institutions. Somers assumed St. Thomas would carefully study UNB’s merger proposal, yet he felt that other real possibilities

might not be explored if I did not place these thoughts before you. Certainly I would feel that I had failed in my duty if I were to be told five or ten years hence that another course of action might have been taken if an opportunity had been granted.

Somers’s proposal is particularly interesting because it might have solved one of the underlying problems of affiliation with UNB: the lack of Catholic professors in upper-level courses. In the broader

picture, it even offered to solve the problem of St. Thomas remaining in Chatham. Yet McFadden was cool to the idea of affiliation with StFX. In the end, he did not pursue Somers's overture. He did not even bring it to the St. Thomas board for deliberation. Did he fear alienating St. Thomas's leading patron, who happened to be the chancellor at UNB? As McFadden explained in a letter to Beaverbrook, "I have politely put them off. For it seems to me that such a system would make more and more of our educated youth less and less 'New Brunswick conscious.'" He told Beaverbrook that he had attended StFX in 1925–27 in order to complete his BA, since at that time St. Thomas offered only the first two years of an arts program. He knew, however, that most StFX students who went on to seminary remained in service in parishes in Nova Scotia. He wanted Beaverbrook to know that affiliation with UNB was still the preferable option.

It is hard to know where Beaverbrook stood on the issue of affiliation between St. Thomas and StFX. Though nominally Protestant (his father had been a Presbyterian minister), he seems to have been keen to support St. Thomas's Catholic identity. An affiliation between St. Thomas and StFX would seem to promise more in that regard than affiliation with UNB, and yet, as a son of the Miramichi and of New Brunswick, as part-time resident of Fredericton and as chancellor of UNB, the urge to prefer New Brunswick over Nova Scotia tipped the balance. He saw Somers's overtures in a political light. As he wrote President Mackay at UNB, he thought StFX's overture was only a reaction to the talks between UNB and St. Thomas. Since nearly 150 Catholic students from New Brunswick attended StFX, any arrangement between UNB and St. Thomas would be seen to threaten StFX with a loss of students. In any event, McFadden's decision not to pursue the StFX connection was crucial because it closed the door on a way of keeping St. Thomas in Chatham. Ironically, closing that door would also put an end four years later to McFadden's rectorship.

Mackay, Leverman, and Beaverbrook

In summer 1956, while Somers at StFX and McFadden at St. Thomas were discussing a possible future relationship, Mackay at UNB pursued his interests with Bishop Leverman of Saint John. He wrote Leverman about Beaverbrook's interest in facilitating an arrangement between St. Thomas and UNB. He asked if he along with Mary Louise Lynch, a member of the UNB senate, might meet with the bishop to discuss the matter further. On August 26 Leverman responded to say he was aware of the discussions and would be happy to meet with Mackay and Lynch, especially since "the matter concerns the Diocese of Saint John." The irony ran deep. Leverman was personally and vitally concerned with such developments, since as the future chancellor of St. Thomas he would have to confront the issue of affiliation with UNB head on, yet he was not at liberty to express that concern. For the present he would have to deal with such affiliation issues indirectly, such as discussing the feasibility of establishing or maintaining Catholic "junior colleges" in cities other than Fredericton while allowing for some sort of physical "Catholic environment" on the UNB campus for Catholic students. In a guarded response, he informed Mackay that the rumours that Saint John was planning some institution of higher learning within its diocese were just that—rumours.

Leverman's response nevertheless encouraged Mackay. In October 1956, he brought the UNB senate up to date about the possibility of "associating" St. Thomas with UNB. He announced that the bishops of both Bathurst and Saint John had indicated "considerable interest." The plan, he announced, was to move St. Thomas to the UNB campus. In his enthusiasm Mackay was clearly running with the bit between his teeth since there was no such plan, at least not yet.

Yet Mackay was aware that any such plan depended on Beaverbrook, UNB's chancellor and primary benefactor. Mackay himself was determined to establish a Catholic college at UNB and at the same time take over the provincial Teachers' College, with its many Catholic students, but Beaverbrook's intentions remained vague. How serious was he about paying for facilities for Catholic students at UNB? Was he interested only in housing them there, or did he want to see the whole of St.

Thomas relocate to UNB?

UNB, St. Thomas, and the Basilian Fathers

Mackay had other advisers at his side. Justice Louis McCoskery Ritchie was a contemporary and friend of Mackay's father, also Colin, a Saint John lumber baron. Ritchie, a World War I hero, was a graduate of King's College law school in 1920, subsequent member of the Canadian Court Martial Appeal Board, and partner in a Saint John law firm that handled legal matters for K. C. Irving. In 1955 he was elevated to the New Brunswick Supreme Court. Ritchie seems to have taken a fatherly interest in the younger Mackay; at any rate he was unstinting of his advice on current issues. He was particularly interested in UNB's proposed acquisition of Teachers' College, as well as moving St. Thomas to the UNB campus. Like nearly everyone else involved in the discussions, however, he was ignorant of the crucially important but as-yet-undisclosed plan to transfer control of St. Thomas from the bishop of Bathurst to the bishop of Saint John.

Although Ritchie had rather more faith in his ability to influence events outside the courtroom than was perhaps warranted, his correspondence is a trove of circulating notions and indeed gossip of the time. One such correspondent was Charles P. McTague, a Toronto lawyer. McTague had attended the Basilian St. Michael's College at the University of Toronto, knew of the Basilian Fathers' role in reviving St. Thomas in 1910, and thought they should get back into education in New Brunswick. On September 25, 1956, Ritchie wrote McTague about the progress of plans to affiliate St. Thomas with UNB. He said he believed that Fr. McFadden, St. Thomas's rector, favoured affiliation but "seemed to hesitate about making an approach on the matter to the Bishop of Bathurst." Ritchie, obviously still unaware of the church's plan to transfer Chatham to the Saint John diocese, wrote that no one knew where the bishop of Bathurst stood on such a move. He said Mackay had told him that Beaverbrook was the person to approach Bishop LeBlanc, since he and the bishop "are on friendly terms." In

Ritchie's opinion, Beaverbrook was "very interested in St. Thomas" and had "a deep admiration for the priests who have kept the university going on very little in the way of plant or financial resources," although as far as he—Ritchie—was concerned, St. Thomas as a university "doesn't rate high in my book." He also told McTague that Mackay discussed with the bishop of Saint John the possibility of relocating St. Thomas, but the latter stated that before he could take a stand "one way or the other the attitude of the Bishop of Bathurst must first be ascertained." In Ritchie's opinion, if the bishop of Bathurst approved, "the Bishop of Saint John will lend his enthusiastic support." Besides, Bishop LeBlanc was busy establishing the Collège du Sacré Coeur in Bathurst, "an Acadian institution," and he would likely appreciate being relieved of the responsibility of maintaining two colleges. In his letter to McTague, Ritchie also suggested that McFadden would "probably favour" bringing the Basilians to help run a Catholic college in Fredericton. Mackay might not like the idea, however, for fear of upsetting Beaverbrook, who "thinks of St. Thomas in terms of Fr. McFadden the Rector." To counter this, Ritchie—like a chess master planning four moves ahead—now told McTague that he had told Mackay to tell McFadden to tell Beaverbrook that the Basilians are "the best qualified for the task under discussion." If McFadden recommended it, Beaverbrook might go along. The "only fly in the ointment" was that the bishop seemed to prefer a college staffed by secular priests rather than by members of a Catholic order. Yet his diocese was short of priests. Did students of a Basilian college, who wanted to enter the priesthood, tend to join the order? Ritchie asked McTague to find out what the story was in Toronto, Regina, and Vancouver, where the Basilians had colleges. And finally: did McTague have any Basilian friends with connections in Saint John who might present their case favourably to the bishop?

McTague wrote back on September 28. He had passed Ritchie's information on to the Basilians at St. Michael's in Toronto. He was pleased to learn that McFadden and Beaverbrook seemed to favour the Basilians "as the best qualified for the task" of running a Catholic college in Fredericton. As for the

stories that most of the students at their colleges joined the order instead of becoming secular priests, Ritchie could tell the bishop not to worry; it did not “accord with the actual experience.” McTague also corrected Ritchie’s mistaken impression as to why the Basilians had left Chatham in 1923. It had nothing to do with opposition to affiliation with UNB, as Ritchie had suggested. Rather, the bishop of Chatham had not been able to support them during “the time of depression.”

Ritchie wrote again to McTague toward the end of October to say he had just attended the 1956 fall convocation at UNB where he talked to Leonard O’Brien. O’Brien, as we saw, was a member of the St. Thomas board, and three years earlier participated in giving his friend Beaverbrook an honorary degree from St. Thomas. The conversation, reported Ritchie, had turned to St. Thomas’s future and the real possibility of affiliation with UNB. O’Brien seemed to like the idea of putting the Basilians in charge of the college if it should move to Fredericton. No doubt, wrote Ritchie, this was because O’Brien had been a student at St. Thomas in Chatham when the Basilians ran it. He added that O’Brien was critical of Bishop Leverman for “not disclosing his attitude until the position of the Bishop of Bathurst was made known.” O’Brien’s position was that “it was not necessary to consult the Bishop of Bathurst at all”: the bishop of Saint John should treat the decision to establish a Catholic college on the UNB campus as a diocesan matter. Ritchie agreed. Furthermore, he had discovered from his “grapevine” that the bishop’s “lieutenant,” the rector of the Saint John Cathedral, was in favour of moving St. Thomas to Fredericton.

Although O’Brien sat on the board of St. Thomas, he too was in the dark about the plans to transfer Chatham and St. Thomas to the diocese of Saint John. Secrecy provided grist for the rumour mill. How could anyone have known that the bishop of Saint John was using the need to determine the Bathurst bishop’s opinion as an excuse to stall for time? Once again, the discussion about the future of St. Thomas by those who should have been in the know was distorted precisely because they were not.

Affiliation Plans Get Bugged Down

Meanwhile, both the bishop of Bathurst, LeBlanc, and the rector of St. Thomas, McFadden, were cooling to the idea of St. Thomas's complete removal from Chatham. On November 14, 1956, McFadden wrote Mackay that he had been doing "some spade work" on the affiliation question and it had become clear to him that "not all agree with our plan—that is—without qualification." To be precise, the bishop of Bathurst had mentioned certain problems, which unless solved made it "doubtful whether he can see his way to support what we would have him actively encourage." According to McFadden, Bishop LeBlanc said that "we shall have to let it be known that between \$100,000 and \$125,000 is given over towards a Junior College on the Miramichi." If this could be done, "and matched by an equal amount from St. Thomas," then it might "be possible to get English-speaking Catholics from Campbellton to Saint John to become officially interested in and 'back' a first rate College in Fredericton." McFadden, mindful of what Somers had told him about StFX-affiliated Xavier Junior College, suggested that "without doubt an 'Aquinas Junior College' affiliated to the Fredericton set-up would not only act as a Feeder but would become more and more a blessing as the population of New Brunswick increases." He hoped Mackay would find his letter "constructive," since he had given the matter "serious and studied thought," but could see no other possibility. If they could persuade Beaverbrook to donate \$125,000 for a junior college in Chatham, the Carnegie Corporation might pledge the same amount toward a four-year college in Fredericton. He reminded Mackay that Carnegie had recently given a million dollars to King's College to move from Windsor to Halifax. McFadden concluded diplomatically that he hoped Mackay would "have the necessary health and courage to continue to work for the betterment of all our people."

The Carnegie Corporation, it turned out, was not interested in paying for a St. Thomas presence in Fredericton. Plans for the move bogged down as both bishops prevaricated, McFadden wavered, and others weighed in with alternatives. On December 21, 1956, McTague informed Ritchie that the bishop of Bathurst was now "definitely opposed" to moving St. Thomas to Fredericton or having "the

Basilians taking over.” He suggested that Ritchie’s idea of urging the bishop of Saint John to establish a diocesan college on the UNB campus would be a move in the right direction, “although I would not be surprised if it did not please the Beaver.”

He was right about that. He was also right about the bishop of Saint John’s establishing a diocesan college at UNB. Although it would ultimately occur, it was far more complex than he imagined.

A Junior College for Chatham?

Early in 1957, hoping to move the discussion forward, Mackay wrote directly to Bishop LeBlanc of Bathurst about the possibility of moving St. Thomas to Fredericton. The bishop, he knew, was aware that discussions had taken place. “It is fair to say,” Mackay wrote, “that the subject was first broached by Lord Beaverbrook, the Chancellor, about a year ago.” He mentioned his discussions with McFadden, some members of the St. Thomas board (i.e., O’Brien) and some graduates of St. Thomas (i.e., Carvell). They suggested he approach the bishop. Mackay asked if he and Louise Lynch, a member of the UNB senate and a well-known Saint John Catholic, could meet with him. The three met in April 1957, but the meeting was inconclusive. LeBlanc informed McFadden that “the interview was very pleasant” and that these preliminary talks were “indicative of some development.” They had come to “an understanding on various points and clarified some other points on which I was not sure.” UNB had shown clearly that it hoped “a Federation of St. Thomas with UNB shall be a reality.” Mackay, reported LeBlanc, had explained that in his view a federated college should be

an integral part [of UNB] but offering Catholic education. The students would avail themselves of the excellent laboratories of the University of New Brunswick while they would pursue their studies in the light of Catholic truth and in accordance with the principles of Thomistic philosophy.

The plan was for all Catholic students to be enrolled at St. Thomas but for their degrees to be conferred

by UNB. St. Thomas could maintain a junior college in Chatham. Mackay, however, had not been definite about financing by Beaverbrook for the junior college “or any extension of the present setup in Chatham.” LeBlanc had made it clear to Mackay that “a Junior College would be of necessity in Chatham.”

Meanwhile, Mackay told his mentor Ritchie about the meeting with LeBlanc, and in his letter of April 16, 1957, Ritchie relayed the news to his friend McTague. The bishop, wrote Ritchie, was “interested” and “prepared to discuss the matter” but “needed time for consideration, although the door was by no means closed.” However, the bishop “stressed that if he did consent to the move, a junior college would have to be maintained at Chatham.” According to Ritchie, Mackay took this to mean “senior matriculation,” the equivalent of the first year of a college program. In other words, suggested Ritchie, the idea appears to have been for St. Thomas to add a thirteenth grade to its high school program and to give over all its other postsecondary courses to the affiliated St. Thomas at UNB. The issue of the Basilians apparently never came up, although Ritchie suggested that the Basilians “might get a foot in the front door” by intimating a willingness to discuss a return to New Brunswick. “The present shortcomings of the college are recognizable,” complained Ritchie. “The showing on the matriculation examinations is not creditable. If the Basilians could take on the school they might be very welcome.”

McFadden’s Fourth Term as Rector

In a letter dated April 11, 1957, Bishop LeBlanc complimented McFadden for having been “resolute in obtaining many improvements of value for this institution” since his first appointment as rector. His third term, however, would soon be up. LeBlanc said he would ask members of faculty, as he had three years previously, to elect or re-elect a rector for the following term. With unintended irony, he informed McFadden that he felt “this way of acting is democratic, although the appointment rests if need be in

the hands of the Bishop.” He then asked the priest-professors to fill in a form indicating “whether you desire him to be reappointed” for another three-year term, “or whether you prefer to have another priest named to the office.” Once again the priests voted in favour of McFadden. Despite the unresolved issues hanging over the institution, McFadden again accepted the rector’s mantle. However, he was becoming convinced that St. Thomas’s future lay entirely in Chatham. With that in mind, McFadden decided to take another look at the plans for new buildings that had been shelved by the interminable discussions about the college’s future.

At the next meeting of the board on August 23, 1957 (the usual May annual meeting having been cancelled), the bishop announced McFadden’s reappointment as rector. McFadden reported on improvements made to the college’s buildings, from insulating the administration building to the construction of three new wooden houses for lay members of the teaching staff. McFadden justified the expense as necessary to retain qualified professors, who were “not paid adequate salaries.” The board approved the expenditures and moved on to deal with complaints about St. Thomas’s high school facilities, provincial inspectors having found them “much below standard.” Were there funds to construct a new building? McFadden said any such construction would depend on whether the college remained in Chatham or moved to the UNB campus in Fredericton. Naturally, this unleashed a lengthy and spirited discussion. Most board members had heard conflicting rumours about the move since their last meeting in June of the previous year.

Affiliation with UNB

The bishop brought the board up to date about plans for possible affiliation with UNB, plans which, he said, he no longer opposed in principle. He reported on his April meeting with Mackay. The central point was that UNB was keen to see an affiliation of some kind with St. Thomas, while St. Thomas was keen to maintain a junior college in Chatham, even if it consisted of only a thirteenth grade. LeBlanc

consulted several Canadian bishops and rectors where arrangements between Catholic colleges and provincial universities existed. He suggested that an arrangement between St. Thomas and UNB, if supported by Beaverbrook, might be satisfactory. He cautioned, however, that it would take a lot of planning. No doubt crossing his fingers under the table, LeBlanc told the board that such a plan might well entail moving St. Thomas to another diocese—namely, Saint John—which might present some difficulties but which could surely be worked out “to the satisfaction of all concerned.”

Some board members wondered whether Beaverbrook, if he were made aware of the poor condition of St. Thomas’s high school buildings, might be persuaded to erect a building for it as well as the one he proposed for St. Thomas on the UNB campus. At any rate, before planning any new buildings in Chatham, the board agreed it would be wise to wait until Beaverbrook’s intentions were clarified.

In late summer 1957, Beaverbrook appears still to have been willing to consider funding a building for St. Thomas College on the UNB campus. In the archive of his correspondence is his apparently positive summary of an enthusiastic letter from Mackay for the plan. Mackay was convinced (mistakenly, it turned out) that “Fr. McFadden is very much in favour of moving,” as were a number of Catholic priests and laity in Chatham. Mackay needed final approval from the bishops of Bathurst and Saint John but thought “there is much better chance of success now than for many years.” The UNB senate voted in favour of the move and gave Mackay “full authority to go ahead,” but Mackay was awaiting a funding decision from Beaverbrook.

At a meeting of the St. Thomas board in August, the rector announced that Beaverbrook was expected in Newcastle the following month for the blessing of the bells he had donated to St. Mary’s Church. The members thereupon passed a motion that the bishop, the rector, and Leonard O’Brien interview Beaverbrook “as to the UNB situation as it affects St. Thomas University.” The board passed another motion that the rector should set about “preparing plans with respect to our facilities at

Fredericton in the event that the College moves there.”

The terms of a number of members, including O’Brien’s, were up, and they needed replacements. Because O’Brien was “intimate with Lord Beaverbrook,” however, and because he had “already done considerable work in connection with the proposed plan with respect to St. Thomas and UNB,” the board voted to retain him for one more year. O’Brien introduced a motion of appreciation for the work done by Bishop LeBlanc in connection with the “possible affiliation of St. Thomas and UNB.”

McFadden’s Doubts

McFadden wrote the bishop following the board meeting and before a meeting of the special committee with Beaverbrook could be arranged. He still had concerns about the junior college that was to remain in Chatham. He hoped they had “consolidated their understanding of the important Question they have to deal with, which is Catholic Higher Education in New Brunswick.” St. Thomas had dedicated about a \$1 million to the higher education of Catholics on the Miramichi. Did Beaverbrook share their interests in that? If so, could that interest “be enhanced and at the same time procure a beginning of a Catholic ‘set-up’ in Fredericton that will develop according to the needs and complexion of the church in NB—as the years go on?”

McFadden was right to harbour doubts. The special committee was unable to meet with Beaverbrook on his visit to Newcastle. Weeks passed with an ominous silence from their erstwhile benefactor. Several loose ends were flapping in the breeze, namely: (1) the offer from StFX for an affiliation, (2) the vagueness of the physical accommodations proposed for Catholic students on the UNB campus, (3) potential problems with bringing the Basilian Fathers back to St. Thomas, (4) the hint of a redrawing of diocesan boundaries, (5) the reticence of the bishops of Bathurst and Saint John to discuss St. Thomas’s future, and (6) potential opposition from their Miramichi supporters to any move

away from Chatham. The situation was unnerving for a man with a tidy mind who preferred to put his hands to such practical problems as constructing the Beaverbrook Arena rather than to pulling together temperamental constituents to make momentous decisions. The prevarication of the bishop of Saint John was especially unsettling, causing McFadden to doubt the wisdom of the UNB affiliation plan.

Leverman wrote McFadden a confidential letter on October 4, 1957, to say he was concerned about unpleasant rumours. He had heard that the reason St. Thomas “has not made any affiliation, amalgamation or union with UNB is because the Bishop of Saint John is against it.” This he denied: “Nothing could be more false if for the only reason that I have not the opportunity to say or do anything in the matter unless it was laid before me for a decision and my decision prevail.” He told President Mackay and Miss Lynch when they had visited him earlier that if the bishop of Bathurst was interested, he was ready to discuss the matter, but that he could not see “how or where” he could do anything without “interfering with an institution under the guidance, direction and control of another Bishop and in another Diocese.” Leverman wrote that his only concern was that

if such a matter were ever brought up seriously, it would require considerable thought and proper direction. This was purely speculative at that moment and remains so. Anything I might do to bring on such an event...without the full knowledge and consent of the Bishop who runs the College could only be interpreted as interference and would be out of order. I was never in a position where I could make a decision, if such a decision was ever to be decided by me, which I doubt.

Leverman, knowing but unable to say that he would soon be given ecclesiastical authority over Catholic affairs on the Miramichi and with it St. Thomas, was stalling as best he could. He was telling McFadden this, he said, so McFadden could state “without reference to this communication that Bishop Leverman could not decide in the matter, the College is not his.” He hoped that would stop statements being made “by various parties,” whom he did not name:

I decided from the beginning that this was not a matter on which I could move unless I was invited to do so: and I have not regretted my decision. To bring pressure or force such a delicate matter would be ear-marked as interfering in another Diocese. Perhaps I am a bit scrupulous about it but unless I am informed otherwise, I still think I am correct.

McFadden responded that he was sorry the bishop had been “bothered and annoyed by groundless rumours.” No doubt through gritted teeth, he wrote that he would do his best to make people realize that “far from hindering, you are actively helping to a great extent the humble work that St. Thomas is trying to do for our Province.” Indeed, he was “hoping to be in a position soon to make a worthwhile offer for your consideration.” Presumably McFadden was hoping a St. Thomas presence on the UNB campus would put paid to Saint John’s desires for postsecondary education for Catholic students. Yet such a move required as-yet-unsecured funding. McFadden apologized to Leverman for not yet arranging a “business interview” with Beaverbrook. On “three or four occasions” in the past month Beaverbrook said he wanted to meet with McFadden, but no definite date had been set. McFadden worried that Beaverbrook “had changed his mind on this important question.” He had also been informed by Mackay that he too had been unable “to pin him down.” McFadden had even gone to Fredericton and sat in Beaverbrook’s office until he was able to see him. Beaverbrook was “unbelievably busy” and could give him only a few minutes, yet McFadden remained “convinced that he is both able and willing to do something big for ‘Irish Roman Catholics of the Province,’ to use his words. I mean he really is going to.” Beaverbrook told McFadden he would be writing LeBlanc from New York.

LeBlanc’s Doubts

On the same day that Leverman wrote to McFadden—October 4, 1957—he also wrote LeBlanc to say he had never publicly opposed the idea of St. Thomas’s “amalgamation” [sic] with UNB: “[I have] not been against anything that might be good for Catholic Welfare in New Brunswick. After all you have not asked me in a formal way and there is no correspondence of a definite nature on the question.” LeBlanc responded to Leverman on October 7 about the forthcoming but still-secret redrawing of

diocesan boundaries and its likely effect on “the project of affiliation” between St. Thomas and UNB. Although he realized Leverman had never openly opposed the project, he reminded the Saint John bishop that McFadden was still labouring under the assumption that they would be “working out a plan in another diocese” when in fact St. Thomas would be in the diocese of Saint John whether or not the move ever took place. As for the actual, physical move of St. Thomas to UNB, he had met with both Mackay and Beaverbrook recently. It appeared that “consideration” and “realization” of the project were “quite far from one another.” If anything were to be arranged, LeBlanc thought it would probably be necessary to have a religious order such as the Basilians take over “a house for Catholic students at UNB.” “If eventually, we could manage to set up a Dormitory, a Study Hall and recreation facilities for our boys, it would benefit all students from whatever diocese they come.” As usual, Beaverbrook was key. If he were to be “so generous as to finance (perhaps some one million dollars) facilities for our Catholic boys at UNB, I believe that we should put our heads together and make efforts not to reject the proposition.” Yet so far, wrote LeBlanc, nothing had materialized, so perhaps the entire project had been abandoned.

LeBlanc wrote Leverman again on November 11 to say there was still no news of “the affiliation project.” He repeated his thoughts on the proposed building and why it would be good for Catholic students, but Beaverbrook had yet to make a specific offer. LeBlanc was clearly edging away from the idea of affiliation toward the simpler idea of having a building on UNB campus available for Catholic students. He said he told Beaverbrook that it would be impossible to move St. Thomas entirely out of Chatham. Besides, what Beaverbrook and Mackay really wanted was “a general setup” in Fredericton. Since whatever form the project took it would be in Leverman’s diocese, LeBlanc concluded his letter to his fellow ecclesiastic, “It is of course your decision that will bring its weight in the matter.”

LeBlanc is Blunt with Beaverbrook

The more LeBlanc thought about it, the less he liked the idea of affiliation. A week later, on November 18, 1957, he wrote Beaverbrook in the Bahamas “to expose my views on the proposed setup in Fredericton as it concerns St. Thomas and UNB.” He thanked Beaverbrook for his letter from New York because it opened the door for him

to discuss openly a project that is of mutual interest, that of St. Thomas College and UNB. Frankly, I do believe that the transfer and location of St. Thomas College from Chatham to Fredericton would be a blow to the community and a setback for the Miramichi district in general and they would not approve of this move. What would be of interest to us and perhaps the University of New Brunswick is a residence on UNB Campus for Catholic students. This building would invite and incite English-speaking [Catholic] boys and others to attend UNB in pursuit of their studies. I have no doubt whatever that if we had a setup of that nature in Fredericton that the flow of Catholic boys towards UNB would soon follow. A number of young men from Saint John would naturally attend UNB for their studies in engineering, etc. It would be nearer their home City.

LeBlanc felt that a Catholic residence at UNB might usefully be run by a religious community such as the Basilians. They were already on the Saskatoon campus,

and very much liked by all concerned in this particular University which is a state University. Eventually, however, we might consider the possibility of having the two last years of the university course in Fredericton while we could keep the Junior College at Chatham if we can manage to find the necessary space for further addition.

A few days later, LeBlanc informed McFadden what he had written to Beaverbrook. He wanted the rector to know his opinion that “there is no question of moving St. Thomas to Fredericton. I was rather blunt but we had come to the point when we had to be frank about the whole matter.” He had received the following brief reply from Beaverbrook: “I was interested in the proposition put forward and your letter will be mentioned to the President of the University in Fredericton. I am extremely glad to have your views on the matter.” LeBlanc wrote McFadden that he interpreted this to mean that Beaverbrook was “much pleased with the plan.”

Beaverbrook and Mackay Disapprove

For all that he said he appreciated frankness, Beaverbrook was not pleased with what LeBlanc had written. Beaverbrook immediately (November 22) wrote Mackay to say so. Mackay was equally displeased. He replied on December 5 that he too was “disheartened” by LeBlanc’s letter. “I have always felt,” he said, “that it would be good to have a Roman Catholic College on the campus and I was particularly encouraged when the St. Thomas alumni wrote to me about the possibility in May of 1956.” He noted that the number of Catholic students at UNB was increasing: 194 in 1956 and 226 a year later. He continued:

Since the religious population of New Brunswick is more than fifty percent Catholic, as the provincial university we must in due course take some action towards providing Roman Catholics with the kind of education which they wish to receive. I think that a failure to take such a step could mean that more and more provincial revenues would be directed towards assisting Roman Catholic institutions in the province. A wide diversification of effort would be detrimental to the provincial university.

It was his understanding, wrote Mackay, that Bishop LeBlanc accepted a plan whereby St. Thomas in Chatham would take students “up to Senior matriculation level,” with the final three years in Fredericton. It now appeared that the bishop was “not anxious for a move because of reaction in the Miramichi area.” His letter “does seem to constitute a set-back to our plans.”

On December 30, 1957, Mackay wrote Beaverbrook again to report little progress in “the business of St. Thomas” but to say he was “not pushing things” as he did not want to get people upset. He was hoping to talk to Leonard O’Brien for more information. O’Brien indicated that St. Thomas was “postponing essential building” because of “uncertainty as to the future” but would not wait much longer. Plans were likely to be finalized soon “to allow for the commencement of building operations in the spring of 1958.”

O’Brien for his part informed Mackay that the reason “the St. Thomas project” was not progressing was because Beaverbrook was preoccupied, finalizing plans for his art gallery in Fredericton. He did not realize that the real reason was Beaverbrook’s cognizance of growing

resistance from both Bishop LeBlanc and Rector McFadden to the idea of relocating, since it in turn reflected the mood of people on the Miramichi.

Ecclesiastical Politics Rule

The two main characters in the story up to now, Bishop Camille LeBlanc and Rector Lynn McFadden, were both doomed to disappointment as a result of church politics. In April 1959 LeBlanc would be removed from his position as chancellor of St. Thomas under a cloud of undeserved reproach. A year and a half after that, McFadden, too, would be removed as rector in equally unhappy circumstances, to be replaced by a more willing servant of the new chancellor.

The year 1958 saw things starting to boil. In February, in order to squelch rumours that Bishop Leverman of Saint John wanted his own college and therefore might arrange to move St. Thomas to Fredericton or even Saint John, McFadden drafted a letter addressed "To Whom It May Concern," which he forwarded to Bishop LeBlanc to add his signature and send out. The draft letter read: "This is to state that it is our intention to maintain and develop St. Thomas College at Chatham, NB, irrespective of any possible institution that may be set up in Fredericton or any other place in New Brunswick." It put LeBlanc in an awkward position. He pencilled the word "NO" on the draft and returned it to McFadden, noting, "I do not feel safe to write such a statement because I cannot commit my successor in this affair and we never know when a successor will come." By "successor" he was implying the next bishop of Bathurst, although he well knew that his successor would be the bishop of Saint John. Yet he did not want to discourage McFadden. He wrote that he was willing to allow the rector "personally to make a declaration with regard to your own knowledge of the proposed or declared intentions to have a setup in Fredericton and that St. Thomas be maintained in Chatham." He added, "[such is] my policy and will be as long as I will be here."

As is becoming clear, St. Thomas's situation in Chatham was affected by ecclesiastical politics.

Some historical background may be helpful. Ever since the Acadian priest, Patrice Chiasson, became bishop of Chatham in 1920, there was dissatisfaction among English-speaking Catholics on the Miramichi. Resentment grew in 1934 when Chiasson replaced the anglophone assistant priest at St. Michael's Cathedral in Chatham with a francophone. Resentment spiked again in 1938 when Chiasson moved the See of the diocese from Chatham to Bathurst—stealing away from town in the dead of night, so the story went, even taking the furniture from the bishop's official residence. Further, without its bishop's *kafedra* (throne), Chatham's magnificent stone gothic St. Michael's Cathedral, completed only seventeen years earlier, lost its status and became St. Michael's Basilica. In fact, the relocation of the See had been in the works for a good while and Rome officially approved it only in the fall of 1938, but such was the legacy of the Catholic hierarchy's penchant for operating in secret that no one on the Miramichi knew it was coming. Further resentment resulted from the appointment of another Acadian, Camille LeBlanc, as bishop of the diocese in 1942.

It helps to explain why a petition dated June 21, 1958, signed by six priests of the diocese of Bathurst, was submitted to the apostolic delegate in Ottawa, the papal nuncio Archbishop Giovanni Panico. Some of the priests teaching at St. Thomas, it was stated, supported the petition, but "did not wish their names to appear." The petitioners were requesting the Holy See to

make some redistribution of the Diocese of Bathurst so that the clergy and people of the Miramichi valley, Northumberland County, might enjoy some part of the justice the Church promotes, and that the ecclesiastical affairs may be placed in the proper balance in this province. Without an English-speaking Bishop to direct the institution of St. Thomas College and without the support of the Diocese of Saint John, the College has not kept pace with other establishments.

The petitioners went on to say that "an easy solution is practical and feasible and must command itself to any just appraisal of the situation." They proposed that "the English-speaking section" of Northumberland County be included in the diocese of Saint John. Since the county was already divided between the archdiocese of Moncton and the diocese of Bathurst, they could see no difficulty in

making a further division. Panico, somewhat tactlessly, sent LeBlanc a copy.

The timing of the petition is suspect, however. The secret negotiations with the Vatican were nearing completion and would announce a proposal identical to the one suggested by the petitioners. It is possible that the petition was sparked by leaked details of the negotiations in order to soften the news when it became public, although it appears to have taken LeBlanc in Bathurst by surprise. At least, as a straw in the wind, it made life easier for Bishop Leverman in Saint John.

St. Thomas Goes It Alone

Throughout 1958, nothing more was heard about affiliation or even construction of a Catholic house at UNB. Finally, McFadden decided it could wait no longer and called a board meeting for December 30, 1958. The board's special committee of three had been unable to meet with Beaverbrook despite O'Brien's special relationship. O'Brien had recently been appointed lieutenant-governor of the province, so his presence at future board meetings was uncertain. McFadden reported that he had seen Beaverbrook briefly but that "the extent of his interest seemed difficult to ascertain." Beaverbrook's health was deteriorating; he left England less often. Getting him to commit to any plan regarding St. Thomas seemed unlikely. It appeared, said the rector, that St. Thomas would remain as it was in Chatham for the foreseeable future.

McFadden next spread out the building plans he had been working on for two years. The plans included classrooms, a residence for arts students, and a chapel. No doubt relieved to be finally moving on, the board approved the sketches and launched into a lengthy discussion about costs. McFadden said St. Thomas had \$150,000 available. If the bishop and the board could guarantee another \$150,000, or some means for borrowing it, together with some hoped-for grants from the Canada Council and the money realized from an alumni fundraising drive for the chapel, they could complete the entire project.

Some members of the board were concerned about borrowing money, but all agreed that

additional space was needed. A strong point in favour of going forward was the residence for the postsecondary arts students: it would allow greater enrolment, and government grants increased as enrolment increased. McFadden introduced the financial statement for 1957–58, showing a deficit of \$23,000. The deficit however, would be covered by the government grant and classroom rental fees paid by the local school board. McGrath, the bursar, reported that the alumni association at its October meeting had launched a financial drive for a new chapel and had undertaken to pay all construction costs. He requested that the alumni be allowed to use McFadden's sketches for the campaign, and the board agreed. The board authorized McFadden to obtain estimates for each aspect of the project.

If the chancellor, Bishop LeBlanc, sitting in the chair, had any reservations about how his replacement would feel about St. Thomas going it alone in Chatham, he kept them to himself. He had done his best for the university under awkward circumstances. The board meeting ended, members confident that St. Thomas in Chatham would finally assume a more important role in the educational life of the province.

Transfer to Saint John Diocese

The silence of the Vatican while the official announcement of the diocesan transfer was being prepared created a difficult situation for LeBlanc. The day following the board meeting at St. Thomas, on December 31, 1958, he wrote Leverman asking for his consideration of the “delicate problem, the solution of which requires our mutual understanding and consent”—referring to the fate of St. Thomas. The petition of the previous June “spoke clearly enough,” but he could do nothing without Leverman's affirmation. As far as LeBlanc was concerned, “the main point seems to be to develop St. Thomas College and other projects.” He may have been the head of a primarily French-speaking diocese, but he had come to care deeply for the English-speaking college of which he had been chancellor for sixteen years. And, to be fair, he had done a great deal for St. Thomas. The petitioners' innuendo that he had

done a poor job looking after St. Thomas must have hurt.

Leverman responded unhelpfully to LeBlanc on January 2, 1959, to say he was sure the bishop would understand that the matter required “proper consideration” before he could send a definite reply, “bearing in mind that whatever the Holy See desires will be observed, and without hesitancy.” He promised to get back to him shortly. On January 13 he wrote LeBlanc again to tell him the diocese of Saint John was preparing to accept the English-speaking section of Northumberland County within the diocese of Saint John, although he was not exactly sure what constituted the English-speaking section. He expressed his concern for St. Thomas but said it was “not easy to see what can be done for that college” and that it would be “a serious affair to take over.” He assured LeBlanc that he would do his best and would cooperate fully with him to arrive at “a final and definite arrangement” despite the problems that were sure to arise. “Whatever is best for Catholic Education,” he wrote, “should be done no matter what sacrifice is entailed.”

Leverman, understandably, did not want to take responsibility for the jurisdictional transfer when the change finally became public. He was well aware that final authority for the move lay with the Vatican, yet the initiative had certainly lain more with him than with the hapless LeBlanc. On January 22, however, he wrote yet again to LeBlanc, “confirming and reconfirming” that the diocese of Saint John had “firmly decided” to accede to Bishop LeBlanc’s “request” that it take over the direction of St. Thomas. This had been confirmed by a unanimous vote of his “consultors” at a meeting on January 13, 1959, in order “to promote Catholic education and in general for the good of souls.” He went on to say that “every cooperation will be given the Bishop of Bathurst who in his good judgment and for the welfare of souls decides that this partition is for the best.”

LeBlanc wrote Leverman on March 3 to say he had heard from Nuncio Panico “that the project on the march has been accepted” but to “keep under secrecy this decision until the official documents come in.” Leverman wrote back the next day thanking him for the news and “for your thoughtful and

considerate dealing with this delicate matter. The burden will be great but the Good Lord will help.”

The burden was indeed great for LeBlanc. He would lose forever what little respect he had gained from English speakers on the Miramichi. He would also lose the working relationship he had built up over the last decade and a half with the rector and members of the board of St. Thomas.

As for Leverman, his hopes for a college of his own had finally become a reality, but the problems for him were just beginning. Should he proceed with plans to move some or all of St. Thomas to UNB? Should he proceed with his earlier idea of establishing a junior college in Saint John? If so, should he somehow tie it to the part of St. Thomas that moved to Fredericton? And although he had an inkling of the attitude of his new Catholic constituents on the Miramichi, now that he was their shepherd how should he deal with their genuine attachment to St. Thomas and desire to keep it whole in Chatham? Life would not be easy, especially the necessary interpersonal dealings with the rector and the board.

Thus it was that on April 2, 1959, just months after St. Thomas's board had confidently approved plans for the expansion of St. Thomas in Chatham, Bishop LeBlanc finally released the genie that had been bottled up for six years. The priests on faculty, as well as all the parish priests of the entire Miramichi area, each received a form letter from the bishop. Attached was a copy of the “Decree from the Sacred Consistorial Congregation in Relation to the Change of Limits of the Diocese of Bathurst.” Oddly, its date of proclamation was February 9, 1959, although for two months no one but the bishops of Bathurst and Saint John (and the latter's “consultors”) had been aware of it. According to the decree,

All the territory commonly known as the “Miramichi” comprising fifteen parishes and twelve missions including Barryville and the Indian reserve of Burnt Church is henceforth detached from the Diocese of Bathurst and annexed to the Diocese of Saint John, New Brunswick.

St. Thomas was obviously included in the transfer, and, equally obviously, would be getting a new chancellor, the bishop of Saint John, Alfred Leverman. What was in store? We can imagine that the

rector, the faculty, and the members of the board of St. Thomas collectively held their breath.

Bishop LeBlanc Tries to Explain

In his letter of April 2 accompanying the decree, LeBlanc explained in heartfelt and even sorrowful terms why he had agreed to this change in the boundaries of his diocese. He stated, somewhat disingenuously, that it was “only after serious deliberation” with his advisers that he had given consent “to the formal request of the signatories, members of the English-speaking clergy of the territory concerned, by which it was expressly petitioned to have the territory of the ‘Miramichi’ district annexed to the Diocese of Saint John.” He said he had learned of the wording of “the petition of the English-speaking clergy” with “profound sorrow” but could “find no cause for objection.” He believed he had

exercised my ministry among the English-speaking Catholics of that particular region with sincerity, devotion and without *parti pris* [bias], having at all times answered all invitations made to me whenever it was possible to do so. I now realize that all my activities were deemed inadequate and not answering the aspirations of those concerned. Therefore I am happy that the turn of events will assure progress and happiness to a population that I have loved.

Leverman wrote LeBlanc in April after similarly circulating to the clergy in his diocese the official declaration of the boundary changes. He told LeBlanc that those in Saint John who had heard about the changes seemed pleased, and added that he hoped “the Clergy and People of Miramichi will also be happy about it.” He was aware that not everyone in the Miramichi area shared his happiness over the changes, including some of those teaching at St. Thomas. “It is a very big change and involves a lot, but” he wrote optimistically, “it is surprising how quickly adjustments are made.”

On April 7, 1959, Leverman issued an official “word of greeting and welcome” to McFadden and the faculty of St. Thomas,

now that the Miramichi and all therein is attached to the Diocese of Saint John. Of the greatest importance is the College which is now ours. In due time we shall all consider the problems which may be there and find gradually the solution. You can be assured of the joy and

satisfaction at the news in this part of the Diocese. Every best wish and good-will are there. I expect, of course, to be invited to the Graduation Exercises and then shall see you all personally, if not before that time. A new future is opening. You can imagine that I face it with some trepidation but knowing I have the good-will, co-operation and spirit of faith of my own priests I face it with confidence in God who has seen fit to grant us this great grace.

He sent a similar message to “The Clergy and Laity of the Miramichi” to be read out at all masses on Sunday, April 12, 1959. The document began with a message of welcome, pointing out that there was

every manifestation of real happiness and joy in this part of the Diocese and this we would like you to know and feel from the beginning. I am confident that you rejoice also, although there will be feelings of regret for many reasons.

He extended to the clergy of the Miramichi the “Faculties” of the diocese of Saint John.

Adjusting to the Transfer

Leverman’s expressions of happiness were a bridge too far. Attaching the English-speaking diocese of Bathurst to the diocese of Saint John indeed gave rise to mixed feelings in the Miramichi area. A francophone priest, J. L. Chiasson, who spent the first six years of his priesthood on the Miramichi, sent what amounted to a letter of condolence to his friend McFadden. He wrote that he had many pleasant memories of the time he spent in the Miramichi area and still had many friends there. “Putting all feelings aside, however,” he was “of the opinion that this change will be for the good of the Catholics of the Miramichi area.” He thought it would “provide greater opportunities for development and progress especially in the field of education.”

Others were resentful, and more prescient. One man wrote Leverman in late April 1959, saying there was “considerable worry” in the area as to whether or not St. Thomas would be removed from Chatham as a result of the boundary change of the diocese. He pointed out that of his four children three would be attending St. Thomas in the fall. If the college were moved it would be impossible for him to send his children to college. It was strange, he wrote, that “no one in the area can find out what is going on in this regard. We believe that the people who built this College and are supporting it are

entitled to some information.” He was “inclined to think there will be considerable opposition” to such a move. Leverman responded, as he would to other such remonstrances, with bland assurances that there were no plans to physically move the college.

Caught in the Middle

At St. Thomas itself the rector was all too aware that “a new future was opening,” as the bishop had suggested, but unsure of the “joy and satisfaction” that it would bring to the college. McFadden was clearly worried about the impact of the jurisdictional change on St. Thomas, but he was also personally hurt. Neither bishop had warned him of the transfer. He wrote to Beaverbrook on April 26, 1959: “Last February the whole Miramichi ceased to be part of the Diocese of Bathurst and is now under the Bishop of Saint John. It was a well-kept secret till two weeks ago.” He was seeking Beaverbrook’s advice because he did not know what he could or should do. Beaverbrook had been St. Thomas’s dedicated and generous supporter over the past few years. “I know of no one who can direct me as well as you.”

An immediate problem, McFadden told Beaverbrook, was the planning for St. Thomas’s fiftieth anniversary in 1960. The previous fall, Bishop LeBlanc told him to go ahead and “plan for St. Thomas on the Miramichi,” so he had gone public “to the great encouragement of the Community in general.” Concerning the longer term, he revealed that at the last board meeting, in December 1958, he had secured approval to begin a major building program for the college. He had announced publicly that the bishop “would back financially the three parts of the proposed building program” for the Chatham campus. But now it seemed “we no longer have that support,” as there was no guarantee the new bishop would support the project. McFadden feared that “the people of the valley will feel deserted (for a second time) if we fail to proceed.” Equally important was to “avoid disappointing the Faculty if they are to be used to form a greater St. Thomas elsewhere in New Brunswick—in the future—not next year,

possibly the following one.” What, he worried aloud to Beaverbrook, would happen under the new bishop? He knew Leverman wanted “a college nearer his See—and that will come in time. But I do not believe we can open a branch now. For unless we strengthen our position here we shall lose the vital support of those who are essential to make St. Thomas flourish.” He put a request for financial assistance directly to Beaverbrook: “If we are allowed to develop the building program (\$300,000 will see it through and it can be used as an Academy later), I feel confident we shall gain the time and strength to establish elsewhere.” The situation was a “delicate and rare case,” wrote McFadden, and he was “caught in the middle.” He appreciated all that Bishop LeBlanc had done for St. Thomas, but he was now gone and could not help even if he wanted to. He concluded his impassioned plea: “There is a difference between the Miramichi and St. John River and this wedding must be done with understanding. Already one party is wondering whether it may be deserted.”

Beaverbrook was unable to offer McFadden any advice. He wrote to say that the best thing would be for them to discuss things in September when he would be back in the province.

The Bishop of Saint John on the Miramichi

McFadden was not the only one seeking advice on how to proceed. Leverman admitted to feeling “a little bit jittery” in a letter dated May 9, 1959, to Oscar Schneller, the Toronto-based accountant and auditor for the diocese of Saint John. He wrote:

The whole picture has changed. We are just beginning to feel the impact of the new addition, the Miramichi. I have now definitely an educational problem, a social one, and one in the field of religion....There is insistence on expansion at the college.

Leverman understood that he had no choice but to proceed with some building in the Miramichi, “since they have the money, Miramichi money, and it has to be spent there.” The physical plant in Chatham needed improvement, which would certainly “secure assistance from this area.” Leverman was aware that UNB was an interested party. He had been told that UNB would soon be after him. But, he

continued, somewhat incoherently:

I do not want to give my college away. It has just been given to me. See the situation. And the "Beaver" is coming this way soon. The people of the Miramichi are afraid they will lose their college and thus you have a nice little package. Some thinking has to be done and some very fine manoeuvring. I shall have my hands full but it is great fun. To secure vocations we must preserve our college. Just what UNB wants I don't know as yet. The whole affair is a bit clouded....I have my own closing this year, *of my college*. Just think. I have a College: and just like that. There is a wonderful spirit but the physical make-up is a bit crumby. I don't like that and shall get rid of it. They need help. [emphasis in original]

In his response of May 13, Schneller questioned the need for a new chapel on the St. Thomas campus as proposed by the alumni association since they already had "the facilities of an oversize cathedral available at the front door," referring to St. Michael's Basilica. He felt it was much more important to complete the rest of the plan, which entailed a new dormitory and classrooms with a connecting administrative building, as that would make them eligible for provincial and federal grants and possibly Canada Council funds. Schneller believed that a good small university was preferable to a large impersonal one. But he also considered a junior college in Saint John "a must if the entity of higher education is to be retained in the Diocese." Schneller suggested that Leverman would have a better picture of the situation after he had discussed the matter with both UNB and Beaverbrook. Referring no doubt to the likelihood of a Conservative defeat and Liberal victory in the coming provincial election, he suggested somewhat darkly that when Leverman talked to Beaverbrook, he "draw him out as to his views on the relative merits of a slanted education program in a state university under the socialist government as against that of an independent Catholic institution which would be immune to any such pressure." Speaking as an accountant, he advised Leverman to specify the objective financial needs of St. Thomas, of a junior college in Saint John, and of welfare work in the diocese.

Leverman was beginning to see St. Thomas in a new light. On May 23, 1959, presiding over his first convocation at "his" St. Thomas, he turned the first sod for the new classroom building. It no

doubt pleased the faculty and calmed the fears of many in Chatham, for actual new construction implied permanence. The physical reality of the St. Thomas campus on the hill above Chatham seemed to be working its charm on the bishop. As he wrote to Schneller, “Just think. I have a College!” Perhaps St. Thomas’s future really did lie in Chatham. “To secure vocations we must preserve our college,” he wrote. “Perhaps the plans to move it to Fredericton were premature.”

UNB Put on Alert

The changes in the diocesan boundaries was naturally of great interest to the president of UNB and others who supported moving St. Thomas to the UNB campus in Fredericton. New construction on the campus in Chatham was ominous. Were they losing one of their presumed allies—the bishop?

On April 24, Justice Ritchie wrote Mackay that when he first heard of the expansion of the boundaries of the Saint John diocese he thought “it augured well for St. Thomas”—meaning of course for UNB—by bringing the Catholic institution into UNB’s orbit. “Alas! I was wrong,” he wrote. Leverman now seemed to be thinking of leaving St. Thomas in Chatham. No doubt, suggested Ritchie, it was because the bishop thought he would get more vocations for the priesthood in Chatham than in Fredericton, although in Ritchie’s opinion if St. Thomas stayed in Chatham, Catholic students who could afford it would go to StFX.

On May 12, Ritchie sent Mackay some more gossip. He had been informed that Leverman “anticipated no difficulty in putting St. Thomas on its feet” since StFX had promised assistance, although whether of staff or cash he was unsure. Ritchie advised Mackay to tell Beaverbrook about the change in jurisdiction, but “the noble lord” had already learned about it from McFadden.

Nobody, it seemed, could figure the bishop out. Two days later, Ritchie wrote Mackay with a “quite different story” about Leverman’s part in the St. Thomas saga. He had this information from J. Paul Barry, a Saint John lawyer who purported to know Leverman’s ulterior motives. According to

Barry, Leverman was simply proceeding slowly and diplomatically because

regardless of what as a matter of caution he may say in casual conversation, the Bishop's personal view is that St. Thomas should be on the UNB campus: that he believes to impose this view on the newly acquired members of his flock could provide discord and start him off on the wrong foot in the Miramichi area; that only a few years have elapsed since he was transplanted from Halifax to Saint John; that St. Thomas has been operating for almost fifty years and is an established Miramichi institution; that a fund of around \$200,000 has been raised or pledged for a new building program for St. Thomas; that if he should advocate converting St. Thomas from a university at Chatham to a college on the UNB campus at Fredericton he would be advocating the destruction of a Miramichi institution and breaking faith with the donors to the building fund; [but] that if the Miramichi clergy unanimously, or almost unanimously, advocated the move he would be prepared to consider it favourably and take steps to ascertain whether a satisfactory arrangement could be worked out with UNB.

Barry also informed Ritchie that if St. Thomas continued as a Catholic university in Chatham, Leverman was prepared to discuss the establishment of a Catholic college on the UNB campus staffed by an order such as the Basilians or the Jesuits. Ever generous with his advice, Ritchie suggested to Mackay that it would be a good time for UNB to begin serious discussions with Leverman. Regarding the politics of the matter, Mackay should also speak to Leonard O'Brien, who "might be able to head off any policy decisions" during St. Thomas's fall convocation, which Beaverbrook was planning to attend. Ritchie also hoped that the UNB senate would approve Leverman's plan "to establish a chair of Catholic philosophy." He wrote, with a stab at humour, that if the bishop could provide

a Basilian professor, perhaps two professors, and a Basilian chaplain, I feel confident the attempt to maintain a full arts course at Chatham would soon be abandoned and the consumption of gasoline and wear and tear on tires between the New Brunswick border and Antigonish would decrease but be more than offset by an increase on the New Brunswick roads to and from Fredericton.

Ritchie exhorted Mackay that "time is of the essence. You should inject yourself into the picture just as soon as your own convocation is off your back." Mackay, a decisive person himself, must have shaken his head. It did not help to have Ritchie advising him what to do based on other people's conjectures about the bishop's ulterior motives. The bishop, Mackay knew, was indecisive by nature.

Hard Heads

In July 1959, Leverman paid another visit to St. Thomas, this time “to line up some minor work to make the old buildings more presentable for the fall” when the students returned. It appears he was beginning to encounter some resistance to his *modus operandi*. As he wrote Schneller, “I have a few hard heads to crack and even certain kinds of threats to make,” but “they will find out that I can be as stiff as they are stout.” Indeed, as Paul Barry had suggested, he had started off “on the wrong foot.”

McFadden, who we know could also be stiff, was undoubtedly one of the “hard heads.” As rector he had never been known for openness or for seeking advice from others. Leverman intended to change that. On July 31, as the new chancellor-designate, he wrote to the rector to express his views on how he thought things should go at the college. He attempted to give McFadden some advice about keeping better accounts and making notes on matters that needed further discussion. He suggested that he bring one or two priests on faculty “in on the whole plan.” That, he told McFadden, was the way he himself worked. He said that although he would not “pretend to advise academically,” he “might be able to give a point or two.... My idea is that we will all work together and everything open. I get many suggestions that way and can see the picture better.” Leverman also gave McFadden the benefit of his opinions about some of the faculty:

Fr. McGrath has good judgment and is objective. Fr. McKendy is excellent but inclined to be emotional and that is not good for progressive work. He already thinks that because we are putting in a basement that means the end of the [idea of a new, separate] chapel. On the other hand it means a better building and a better chapel. The whole outfit will be improved.

We can only wonder at McFadden’s reaction as he read his chancellor’s admonitory letter. Working with the previous bishop had presented challenges from time to time, yet things had worked out. Working with the new bishop promised to be even more challenging.

Down to Business

The annual board meeting in 1959 was not held until August 1. Bishop Leverman did not attend, because the government had not yet amended St. Thomas's Act of Incorporation to name the bishop of Saint John a member of the board, so Leverman could not yet officially be recognized as St. Thomas's chancellor. He was not pleased by the delay, but he understood the sanctity of rules. McFadden chaired the meeting and reviewed the year's work. Discussion centred on construction of the classroom building and plans for the other buildings intended to house dormitories, administrative offices, and a chapel. The board approved the plans. It also passed a motion that the bishop "be requested to complete and finalize the plans and specifications for the overall projects, residence, chapel, etc."

The board had four vacancies. Instead of nominating replacements, it passed a motion authorizing the rector to name the new members after consulting the bishop. Leverman, as it turned out, was unhappy with the motion, because he had planned to increase on his own the Saint John representation, but for the moment there was little he could do. In the meantime, he made several visits to the Miramichi during the summer. As he wrote Schneller in early August, "the first reactions are now wearing off and we are more down to business." His opinion of the Miramichi people, he wrote, had changed for the better. The priests whose spirit he had admired earlier were proving their mettle. They were "a good bunch but pretty sharp and as usual, as you find in places somewhat isolated, very careful and cautious." Some had made their feelings clear that "the College was not to be touched," but when it came down to promoting it "the enthusiasm is not in proportion." He told Schneller that "gradually they will see that I mean business." According to the bishop, the people of the Miramichi had not supported their college sufficiently, and they could not blame their former bishop for this. "The fault," he claimed, "lies more with themselves." If they could find money to build a large church in Newcastle for Fr. Hickey, why had they not been able to raise half a million for the college? "Simply because they have been sitting down and doing nothing, quite smug and comfortable and satisfied with their little own wood-pile. Well I am putting a match under the wood-pile and there will be a conflagration after a

while.”

Schneller wrote Leverman back on August 14 in his accountant’s mode, tempering the bishop’s criticisms by suggesting that if not for Chatham’s fundraising campaign, the cost of “acquiring the Miramichi and the rehabilitation of the College” would have “destroyed” the Saint John diocese financially. He thought that the area, and possibly the college itself, had been “allowed to develop into a small island of independence in a predominately French Diocese,” and that “probably a good deal of work will have to be done before it can be brought up to the standards of the rest of the Diocese.” Still, thought Schneller, it was probably a good thing that the Miramichi was brought into the diocese of Saint John now rather than later.

Those who had been hoping for a St. Thomas presence on the UNB campus in Fredericton were unhappy with how things were going in Chatham. On August 31, a disgusted Ritchie asked Mackay: “Can we conspire to establish a chair of Catholic Philosophy at UNB? If so, on what terms? I am afraid Bishop Leverman must be abandoned. He is planning to spend \$625,000 on the expansion of St. Thomas. I could spit.” Mackay replied that he was also disturbed by Leverman’s attitude, but added that “just when I had given up all hope over the law school we were able to win out.” He was referring to the bar society’s agreement to move the law school from Saint John to Fredericton, where it would be housed in Beaverbrook’s former residence, Somerville House, handy to UNB. “However,” he wrote, “I realize that Bishops can be more difficult than Bar Associations.”

Mackay, Beaverbrook, and Leverman attended the fall convocation at St. Thomas in September 1959. The latter presided as chancellor-designate. Unfortunately, we have no record of the informal discussions among the three, or with McFadden, or with the recently appointed lieutenant-governor (until recently a member of the board), Leonard O’Brien, who also attended. Talk of moving St. Thomas to Fredericton appeared to have died down, at least among these VIPs. It seems they were all waiting for the bishop to take the lead. In early October, Leverman himself was still waiting for the

government to amend St. Thomas's Act of Incorporation naming him a member of the board. Even so, as chancellor-designate he proceeded to plan meetings at St. Thomas for November. In late October he wrote McFadden to say he would come to Chatham for several days. He wanted to meet with the college's priests and the board. With the priests, somewhat ominously, he proposed "to study the University situation and lift matters up as best we can for a start." The meeting with the board was "so that we will have things pretty well lined up and know what we are talking about." McFadden set a special meeting of the board for November 12.

Msgr. Donald Duffie on St. Thomas's Prospects

Prior to the board meeting, Leverman contacted a person he knew in Halifax who, he hoped, could give him some information about higher education in general and St. Thomas College in particular. In light of the role that person would play in St. Thomas's relocation to Fredericton, it is worth investigating his background.

Msgr. Donald Churchill Duffie, originally a priest from the Saint John diocese, was a Catholic legal scholar of some prominence who was presently teaching at Mount St. Vincent University in Halifax. Born in Oromocto, NB, in 1916, Duffie attended the Collège St-Joseph in Memramcook where he earned a BA in 1934 at the age of 18. He attended the provincial law school in Saint John, earning a Bachelor of Civil Law degree in 1937, following which he worked briefly in the New Brunswick attorney-general's office under John B. McNair in Fredericton (where he also did some reporting for the *Daily Gleaner*). He left that position in the fall of 1937 to attend Oxford University as a Rhodes scholar, where after two years at Brasenose College he received a second Bachelor's degree in law. Duffie returned to Canada, but rather than follow his brothers William and Ted into politics, he entered Holy Heart Seminary in Halifax. He was ordained a priest of the diocese of Saint John in 1945 by Bishop Bray. Bray was just then concerning himself with the education of English-speaking Catholics

in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, and was about to commission Dr. Roy Deferrari, secretary-general of the Catholic University of America, to conduct an investigation. It is possible, even likely, that Bray discussed the issue of Catholic education with the knowledgeable Duffie, including the situation at St. Thomas, UNB, and StFX.

After spending a year and a half in parish work in Saint John, Duffie attended Laval University to study for a Doctorate of Canon Law (JCD) and at the same time taught a course in common law. In 1948 he was appointed to a three-member, regional Catholic matrimonial tribunal for the Maritime provinces and Newfoundland. He moved back to Halifax where he taught canon law at his alma mater, Holy Heart Seminary, for several years. He taught common law full time at St. Mary's University from 1951 to 1953 and part-time after that. In 1958, in recognition of his legal training and scholarly experience, Duffie was awarded the ecclesiastical title of Monsignor (Msgr.), recognizing him as an officer of the Catholic Church above the level of the ordinary clergy. When Bishop Leverman contacted him in 1959, he was a part-time law professor at St. Mary's, chaplain at Mount St. Vincent College, and chaplain for the Canadian Federation of Catholic College Students.

Leverman had served with Duffie on the matrimonial tribunal in Halifax and was his immediate superior in the Saint John diocese. He naturally thought of consulting him about the future of St. Thomas, requesting information particularly on the practice of operating a combined high school and university. Duffie was happy to oblige. He informed the bishop that, for many years, this had been the practice at most universities: arts education was seen as a continuation of high school. The scarcity of postsecondary college students had made it impossible to operate a college independently. If you had only a college, the teaching staff would not be fully employed. Over the last two decades or so, however, as Duffie explained to Leverman, the situation had changed. High schools in most places were separated from colleges. It was true that some universities, such as Mount Allison and Mount St. Vincent, still technically operated high schools, but they were completely separate "as regards physical

plant, faculty, finance and government.” Duffie also explained how the increase in the number of state-funded and privately endowed universities had forced denominational colleges to change their thinking, having to “compete on the plane of personality as well as religion.” Furthermore, those high schools connected to colleges had “by their nature” attracted students who would not be able to pass in the public high schools. Some of those students “needed correction, development, or more than ordinary assistance.” The number of available students today, suggested Duffie, was “sufficient for a good college; faculty and finance are a problem, but not to be solved by the addition of a high school.” Concerning St. Thomas, he thought they would be wise to drop at least grades nine, ten, and eleven. “If we are thinking in terms of what we wish to call a bold future, such is demanded.” It could best be done over three years, dropping one course each year. There were probably enough students available for a good college or university in Chatham, but the standards “must be right and the reputation untarnished by anything of a deprecatory nature in the educational set-up.”

Duffie’s words must have impressed Leverman. Here was an articulate argument for not making St. Thomas—as previously envisaged—a “senior matric” high school of thirteen grades. Duffie was encouraging Leverman’s leanings toward building St. Thomas into a respectable, stand-alone Catholic college for all English-speaking students in the province, and a source of priests for New Brunswick parishes. In his brief to the bishop, Duffie urged him to consider the significance of the potential university population in the Maritimes, which was expanding rapidly. Duffie estimated that Nova Scotia universities would be turning away five hundred to a thousand qualified students over the next few years unless they built new facilities. He told Leverman he had talked to people who still thought of St. Thomas “in terms of a high school.” He had met a former New Brunswicker who wanted to send his six sons to college and had asked about St. Thomas, but “he felt it was not recognized sufficiently as a college.” The man asked Duffie to contact someone at StFX instead.

Duffie concluded his prophetic letter to Leverman as follows:

I have every confidence in the future; look back a few years to where no-one knew where Antigonish was, much less had heard of StFX. You or I will not see the completion of Chatham's work, but in 2009, as the 100th anniversary celebrations begin, they will say you began a great work exceedingly well, with the new era of 1959.

It was only somewhat prophetic. In 2010, a flourishing St. Thomas would indeed celebrate the centenary of its existence under the name St. Thomas, but the celebrations were in Fredericton, not Chatham. Neither Leverman nor Duffie would be much praised for their "great work" in bringing that about. For the moment, however, armed with Duffie's statistics, practical advice, and implicit support for rebuilding St. Thomas in Chatham, the bishop prepared to meet his board.

Bishop Leverman's First Board Meeting

The board met on November 12, 1959, as called by Rector McFadden. Although the amended Act naming the bishop of Saint John to the St. Thomas board still had not been proclaimed, proclamation was by now just a formality, so Leverman presided as chair. Nine members of the board were in attendance. Leverman opened the meeting by expressing his pleasure at having the Miramichi area in his diocese. He remarked on the "overall picture of education in the Diocese, the great need of a College, its expansion, and the initiating of a program that would provide the means of ensuring the completion of the desired expansion." For those members hoping to expand the campus in Chatham, these were encouraging words.

The first item of business was to increase the size of the board. Leverman naturally wanted to add new members from Saint John and Fredericton. The members presented five names of local persons. Leverman requested permission to choose, in consultation with McFadden, the new members from the names suggested at the meeting, "as well as others." The suggestion seemed reasonable, given the Saint John-centred diocese in which St. Thomas now found itself, and the board voted in favour. In fact, the motion was a reversal of its decision in August, whereby the rector had been authorized to

appoint members following consultation with the bishop. Now it was the other way around. Chatham members would look at the decision differently three years later, when the St. Thomas community had to confront the issue of actually moving to Fredericton.

Board members were curious to learn about the status of the amendment to the university's Act of Incorporation, or, as it was referred to, its charter. Leverman read out the "Petition for a new Charter" that he had prepared for the New Brunswick government containing the necessary changes to the 1939 Act, which named the bishop of Bathurst as ex officio board member. The petition requested to transfer to the bishop of Saint John the former's "rights, privileges, benefits and authorities respecting the corporation." William Creaghan, a Chatham lawyer, proposed that the term "college" be changed to "university" in the petition, meaning that the institution would be officially known as St. Thomas University instead of St. Thomas College. He also proposed that the rector should henceforth be called "president," and moved that the petition be signed by the president and the secretary of the board. The motion passed unanimously. The amendment was officially enacted in 1960 (made retroactive to April 2, 1959). It read:

The said Act is further amended by changing the name of the institution to "St. Thomas' University," and all property, real and personal, rights, privileges, powers, franchises, concessions and authorities presently vested in the institution under the name "St. Thomas' College" shall hereafter be vested in it under the name "St. Thomas' University."

Even so, it took several years before most people adopted the new name and new titles, continuing to refer to the "college" and its "rector," and to this day no one uses or acknowledges the possessive in the legal title, preferring simply "St. Thomas University."

The next item on the agenda promised to be more controversial. The matter of separating the high school from the university had been raised many times before. The cost of operating the high school regularly exceeded revenues, especially the cost of keeping boarding students, many of whom could not pay full boarding fees. Even though the program had produced many good students who

continued on in the university's postsecondary arts program, consensus was growing that the high school should be closed, or at least removed from St. Thomas. Some members still thought the high school program might remain if it ceased taking in boarding students except in grade twelve. Others favoured continuing to accept boarders but closing the program entirely over the next few years, beginning with grade nine in September 1960. Using Duffie's information, Leverman joined the discussion. As he saw it, the issue at this point was not whether to close the program but how quickly to do so. He was in favour of closing it right away, starting with the boarding students. He pointed out that doing so would free up some faculty members teaching there, "thus enabling them, or at least some, each year to continue their post-graduate studies and become qualified College professors," which would help solve the university's staffing problems. The bishop was reminded that the university had a commitment to the town of Chatham to operate the high school. The board decided to turn the matter over to an administrative committee, consisting of the chancellor, the president, and the registrar.

The board turned its attention to the possibility of offering some St. Thomas courses in Saint John. Leverman said he had no objections if St. Thomas faculty wanted to play a contributory role in a new junior college there. They might even offer an introductory engineering course, as they were already offering one in Chatham. The board agreed with his opinion that it was "necessary to get in on the ground floor to ensure the foundation of a Catholic institution in Saint John."

That discussion led to questions about the expansion of the campus in Chatham, since plans for building projects had already been drawn up and approved by the board at its last meeting. Leverman added his approval to the plans and suggested the new classroom building under construction be named after Fr. Arthur Scott, who died unexpectedly three years earlier and "who did so much in the field of education." Everyone present approved the suggestion.

The date for the board's next annual meeting was set for May 1960. McFadden ended the meeting by thanking the bishop for his "tremendous work and interest in the welfare of St. Thomas"

and promised his and everyone's cooperation. Leverman asked board members to keep the business discussed at the meeting "in strict confidence," as public announcements would be made at a later date. The members must have left the meeting convinced that the future of the university was secure.

Importance of the New Buildings

Leverman's first board meeting had gone well. He was unexpectedly pleased with the situation at St. Thomas, or at least with the promise of its improvement. The board's administrative committee had decided to remove the high school program entirely from St. Thomas over the next two years, starting with an immediate end to boarding provisions for those students. Furthermore, he was confounding the plotters who envisaged moving St. Thomas to UNB. The addition of the Miramichi to his diocese was a feather in his cap. He now had a college of his own. On location in Chatham—as opposed to viewing the situation from Saint John—he was impressed with the college and its dedicated teachers. The plans for modernizing the campus were now *his* plans.

He authorized a diocesan canvass for various needs within the diocese, including funds for the new buildings on the St. Thomas campus. The St. Thomas alumni would be expected to support the campaign. Following the board meeting, McGrath as instructed wrote to Beaverbrook on behalf of the alumni association asking if they could name him "Honorary General Chairman of the Alumni canvass." Kay O'Brien also wrote Lord Beaverbrook on behalf of the alumni, explaining that it was a courtesy asking him to be the honorary general chairman of the campaign since he was "a very distinguished friend and alumnus." She thought he might not remember McGrath, so she added:

He is the man in full charge of the rink, and I always think of him as the man who sleeps on a shelf [a reference to his small room in the college]. I can only hope that as buildings go up, these priests will be given living-quarters where they may know some degree of ease as they end each day somehow undefeated.

Beaverbrook, his health deteriorating again, replied that he was willing to help St. Thomas and that "if

it is essential” he would “reluctantly serve” as they had proposed. He sent a \$1,000 cheque toward the campaign.

The campaign was the most ambitious attempt so far to raise funds for St. Thomas. In December, the organizing committee sent out a glossy, twenty-eight page brochure to former students and friends of the university within the diocese and beyond. It contained a photograph and a brief message from His Holiness Pope John XXIII. Bishop Leverman was also pictured, along with his personal request to those in his diocese and beyond to support the cause of Catholic education. Other photographs showed Lord Beaverbrook, President McFadden, Lieutenant-Governor O’Brien, the teaching staff at the college and the high school, and students involved in various sports. Included was a list of some prominent graduates including two bishops, two domestic prelates, two members of the House of Commons, a senator, judges, mayors, forty-two members of the clergy, lawyers, doctors, businessmen, teachers, and well-known sport figures.

The brochure presented a brief history of St. Thomas and gave a description of the old facilities that had served well but were now considered inadequate; namely, the arts residence, the old “Bishop’s Palace,” the library, the chapel, the old administration building, the classrooms, and the gymnasium. Then it outlined the proposed new construction, including a photograph of the first building presently under construction, the Fr. Arthur Scott Memorial Building, with its fourteen new classrooms in two storeys. Attached to it would be a modern two-storey residence for 120 students and a third building for administrative offices. Another new building would provide for a chapel with seating capacity for three hundred, an auditorium, and a cafeteria-type refectory. There were even plans to refurbish the old three-storey main building to make it the university’s administration building.

According to the brochure, the new construction would allow the university to hire additional staff and offer more courses, thereby greatly increasing enrolment. Although the college would be closing its high school program, there would be opportunities for adult education and an extension

program. Improvement of the facilities, it suggested, would bring about a “renaissance of the spirit.” The new chapel would deepen the spiritual life of the college, and the new auditorium would promote “drama and allied arts” as well as provide space for events such as convocations. Optimism reigned among the staff and throughout the community. In a letter dated December 27, 1959, Leverman wrote Schneller that he found it “extraordinary” to think that a new classroom building would be ready when students arrived back after the Christmas holidays. Indeed, on January 5, 1960, the bishop, with President McFadden and Lieutenant-Governor O’Brien in attendance, officially opened the new Scott Memorial Building. It had been completed in just six months; McFadden and bursar McGrath oversaw construction. The speedy completion surprised Leverman, who referred to it as “a turning point in the University’s Expansion Program.”

The classroom building in place, Leverman turned his attention to the residence building. If construction began in the spring, he told McFadden in a letter dated February 15, “judging from what they had been able to do in six months,” most of it would be completed before the end of 1960. It was projected to cost \$500,000–\$600,000, but he had confidence in the fundraisers. Meanwhile, he wanted to get busy “clearing out the High School Boarders,” most of whom, echoing Duffie’s remarks, were there only because “they were more or less of a problem at home” and “a headache to the priests.” Once the high school was closed down entirely, a few of the freed-up “priest-teachers” could be sent to graduate school.

Impatient as ever, the bishop was feeling the need to urge on his “hard head,” McFadden. It was necessary that the plans “be worked on every day” since such a large building program could not be undertaken “without clear-cut and definite plans and specifications.” He told McFadden they must start building in the spring because, if they were not “clear and definite” in their resolution to get the work done, “then we will find ourselves in the middle of Spring and early Summer far behind in our plans in starting the building of the new St. Thomas.” The new buildings would demonstrate the seriousness of

their intentions to keep the university in Chatham.

People on the Miramichi, he realized, were excited about what was happening. Later, that excitement would turn to resentment aimed at the bishop himself when he changed his mind. But for the moment he was pressing on under full sail, heedless of the storm clouds ahead.

In the middle of February, the bishop wrote McFadden to ask if he had got rid of the high school boarders yet, as had been decided at the fall's board meeting. It was, he wrote, "important to understand that this step is being taken and that it is final in our resolutions." At the same time, he informed McFadden, he felt it would be an opportune moment to get something started under the St. Thomas name in Saint John. The newspapers were reporting that the idea of a junior college there was "very much alive with the Board of Trade," particularly an institution that could offer engineering courses. He had a Beaverbrook-owned building in mind that might be used for classrooms. "This is important to me because I must know what is required so that I can plan to get the building prepared for the Fall session." Knowing of McFadden's friendship with Beaverbrook and unsure of his lordship's feelings toward himself, he asked McFadden to approach Beaverbrook to see if he would give them his property in Saint John, "which is lying idle and empty." He was referring to Beaverbrook House, a large, red brick Georgian manor on Carleton Street, until recently the home of the provincial law school. He thought it likely, so long as it was wanted "for a definite purpose." He doubted that St. Thomas would be stopped from offering courses in Saint John, but if they were going to offer engineering they had to be well prepared.

Saint John notwithstanding, Leverman assured McFadden his priority was to establish St. Thomas's presence in Chatham. Aware of "the doubts of certain people elsewhere" (no doubt thinking of Justice Ritchie's disparaging remarks), the bishop wanted the rector's assurances that St. Thomas students were getting a first-class education. He asked for a report on how they were doing,

a brief estimation of their studies for the half term, and in your report you could tell them that

you have acquainted the Bishop with the facts and give them the necessary word of advice and counsel from me that I expect them to be most attentive to their studies.

McFadden wrote back immediately. In a letter dated February 18, he reported that construction of the new residence and administrative buildings would proceed on schedule. The architect had visited St. Thomas, had discussed the plans with McFadden and some of the priests, and would have definite specifications ready for public bidding by early spring. McFadden also said he understood the need to begin offering courses in Saint John. Some priests in Chatham, he said, were quite willing to offer courses in the port city. Offering an engineering course would not be a problem. Several students who had taken the engineering course at St. Thomas had already gone on to their second years in engineering at StFX and McGill. As soon as the legislature ratified “a new charter granting permission to offer courses off-campus,” wrote McFadden (not realizing that St. Thomas’s existing Act of Incorporation already allowed such offerings), he would be able to hire the necessary teaching staff.

Leverman was much encouraged. He replied that St. Thomas “had to make an impact on Saint John,” which was also ripe for adult education courses. Sharing McFadden’s misunderstanding about the university’s legal authority to offer off-campus courses under its original Act of Incorporation, he wrote that the delay in “getting the new charter from the government” was “highly frustrating.”

Responding to Leverman’s request for a report on students, McFadden informed him that eight university students were “in poor standing,” but that Fr. George Martin, dean of studies, would speak to them individually. If the bishop wished more information about other students, McFadden was happy to comply. There is no record of the bishop’s response, but we may assume that he gave up pressing the president on the issue. More important things were at stake, in particular the new residence building.

After looking over McFadden’s final plans, Leverman decided he wanted changes. He sent the suggestions to McFadden, who was to forward them to the architect. Because a large number of students were expected to enter university, he wrote, St. Thomas was going to be “very much

crowded,” so “we should take care of ourselves to some reasonable measure. There is no going back on this educational program.” He would discuss things with the rector in mid-March when he planned to spend three days in Chatham, Newcastle, and Nelson over the St. Patrick’s Day weekend.

One can imagine the conversation between these two micro-managers at their meeting in March. Most of the changes Leverman suggested were trivial, such as installing hanging urinals in the boys’ basement washroom rather than “those extending to the ground.” According to the bishop, it had been determined “that the hanging ones are more easily kept clean.” Furthermore, he felt there were too many basins and toilets in the washrooms. He preferred “one basin and one bowl for [each of] the Men’s room and the same for the Women’s.” As compensation—evidently neglecting the cost of the extra plumbing—Leverman suggested they could install a wash basin in each room. He had also questioned the need for overhead lighting in the residence rooms instead of simply bed- and desk-lamps. And he proposed installing a door at the end of the corridor, “just as you turn left to the Lounge and the Reading Room, which would keep noise from the section closed off and also prevent seeing students going from room to room dressed in various ways.” He even suggested different locations for the milk service and the dishwasher.

McGrath, the easygoing bursar who was assisting McFadden with the planning, later remembered with a laugh how the bishop would get angry when some of his proposed changes were not permitted by the building code, in some cases because they would weaken the structure of the building. When told that a particular door could not be repositioned, the bishop insisted that they do it anyway. They had had to fetch the building inspector to explain why it was not possible.

At last the plans for the new residence were finalized. On May 17, 1960, Leverman, using the same spade he had used a year earlier for the first building, turned the first sod. Construction was scheduled to begin in June.

Optimism at St. Thomas

Energized by the new construction, a revived St. Thomas Alumni Association was raising money, in particular for the new chapel. Alumni were meeting not only on the Miramichi but also in Grand Falls, Edmundston, Campbellton, and Bathurst. At a banquet on January 23, 1960, at the French Fort restaurant at Nordin, near Newcastle, there had been talk of establishing night classes at the university and expanding opportunities for part-time students to obtain BA and BEd degrees. A promise of \$10,000 from the bishop toward new scholarships had sparked association efforts in that direction. Robert Martin, member of the legislative assembly representing Chatham, an alumnus of St. Thomas and brother of George Martin, dean of studies, rose to say he was “greatly impressed by the new bishop, who will put St. Thomas on the map...to expand it to serve the people of the Miramichi.” Fr. Henry McGrath, acting as alumni director, thanked Robert Martin for being “a guiding force and a tower of strength” in organizing alumni fundraising meetings. He told the banqueters: “Don’t forget a prayer and the drive will be a success.” Msgr. Raymond Hickey, in his closing remarks, referred to the plans for the new chapel, to be built by alumni donations, as “a gem of architecture.”

Shortly afterward, the bishop sent McFadden a cheque for \$10,000 from the campaign fund to assist with current accounts and to cover payments for the plans for the new buildings and some kitchen equipment. He also sent a cheque for \$500, which he had obtained from a non-Catholic butcher in Chatham. He had visited the butcher before leaving Chatham the previous November. The bishop wrote in his accompanying note that he had been very pleased with his visit and had come away “with two pounds of sausage, two pounds of back [bacon] and the generous cheque.” He was much impressed by the man’s “idea of assisting your neighbour, without thought of return.” McFadden replied drily that “he is a former student, you know, and some of his buddies have been after him to help out. Of course we do business with his company in thousands of dollars annually. I believe he can do more towards the drive.” The bishop was miffed that his efforts “did not bring the joy” he had hoped for from

McFadden, writing that “at least I secured 500 which was not secured before, judging from the efforts you say were made.”

Yet the rector had little reason to belittle the bishop’s efforts. In the spring of 1960 the college, which had struggled to survive for so long, appeared to be blossoming as the permanent university of the Miramichi. The construction of new buildings created optimism among students and faculty, and in the wider community. The new bishop was supporting the fundraising drive across the diocese and was encouraging priests to obtain higher degrees to raise the status of the faculty. He was urging faculty to offer courses in Saint John. Plans were underway for a summer school program. People on the Miramichi felt they had found in Bishop Leverman the “one man needed to start the ball rolling.”

When Leverman wrote Schneller on May 24, 1960, he had just presided over his third St. Thomas convocation. Although still “chancellor-designate,” he felt good about the ceremony “in the magnificent church, and the Convocation was wonderful.” He told Schneller that he authorized the convocation to be held there, and it “had them grinning. Their college is very precious to them and they have gone thru [sic] a lot to preserve it and it stays.” Despite his enthusiasm, he admitted that having a college brought a host of problems. One was the need for a proper residence. At convocation he had turned the first sod, but construction had been put off for a month. Based on what they had been able to do with the classroom building, he believed it could be finished before the end of the year. He was not sure where the money would come from, although the diocesan canvass was progressing well.

Leverman continued:

There is a wonderful challenge here. It needs some planning and foresight....They are really down at the heels...[but] the spirit is wonderful and the priests are admirable. This is not a casual estimation. Your remark that they will come out with a better plant is proving correct. They have been trying to economize but it was false economy and something has to be done and right away. I gave the green light for the money they have.

Giving a green light to the building program had won the trust of McFadden and his staff and helped calm the community’s fears that the university might be moved—or worse, closed. McFadden

may have seen Leverman's involvement in the planning process as irksome and an unnecessary interference, yet it was well intentioned. When Leverman learned, for example, that the residence building was to be built on a concrete slab, he ordered a basement for it instead. "They need more room," he wrote, "and there would be no regret for making that change."

The new construction plans may have helped assuage local worries, but they complicated Leverman's relations with UNB. President Mackay and UNB Senator Mary Louise Lynch paid the bishop a visit in late June 1960. Following the meeting, Leverman wrote McFadden to say he feared they might "put up a counter proposition," but was relieved when they accepted his statement that he was not in a position "to say much about the future of the College." They left the way open for discussion "if and when we were disposed." They had given him the impression that they still believed Beaverbrook "would put up something" for St. Thomas on the UNB campus. He assured McFadden, "You know I do not want that."

Later, people would wonder about Leverman's motives. Yet there is every indication that at the time he was genuinely convinced St. Thomas's future lay on the Miramichi. As he wrote to Schneller following the UNB visit, Beaverbrook apparently had made no actual commitment to put up a building for St. Thomas on the UNB campus. The reason for the UNB visit had been that Mackay

just wanted to find out how the wind blows. I made it clear that it was important to us to have our own institution. Dr. McKay [sic] knows that it was he who suggested that to me about two years ago. He understood the reason for having our own place. This is without prejudice, rivalry or competition. I was afraid that they might bring up the question of having a residence anyway and putting a few priests there. This would impede our own expansion, it would seem, for they would all say that now we can go to Fredericton. I would have stalled in such a situation but fortunately they did not bring it up. After all the Beaver knows what the college means to the Miramichi. That is why he did not press the question at the time it was first discussed. Knowing what I do now, I wonder that any of them on our side discussed it as much as they did, knowing the mind of the priests and people.

Leverman had come to believe that St. Thomas in Chatham, with a proposed outreach in Saint John, was an illustration of how a Catholic postsecondary institution could work in New Brunswick. He was

adamant that there was a place for religion in a university and that “we have succumbed too often to expediency.” Referring to the drawbacks of attempting to establish a Catholic presence on the campus of UNB, he declared to Schneller that “it is time to realize that we must do something and that we are able to do something.”

His optimism, and that of the members of the St. Thomas community in general, was understandable. Yet he was whistling in the wind. Outside forces were building that shortly would throw all his plans into reverse.

Sources, Chapter 6

For the material in this chapter, extensive use was made of the written correspondence of Bishop Camille LeBlanc, Bishop Alfred Leverman, and Fr. Lynn McFadden, as noted in the quoted passages. Most 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] and that of Justice Louis McCoskery Ritchie [copies in both ADSJ and PANB].

Other sources used were:

Minutes of the Board of St. Thomas University, 1956-1960

St. Thomas College (or University) Calendars (various years)

The Aquinian 1956-1960

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:

Fr. Henry McGrath

-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