



Professor Peter Earl is leaving Lincoln University for Australia.

Frustration drives academic to Queensland

by Martin van Beynen

Canterbury's climate and outdoor lifestyle attracted Professor Peter Earl to Lincoln University 10 years ago but they are not enough to keep him here.

Next week the Cambridge-educated, English economist, who has published 14 books and basked in the praise of Nobel Prize winners, joins the brain drain on his way to the University of Queensland.

Frustrated with his salary, workload, lack of resources, and the direction of university education in New Zealand, he has been prepared to take a drop in seniority to make the move.

However it will not be costing him. A mid-range academic in Queensland earned as much as a senior academic in New Zealand and Queensland University's

superannuation and other conditions were also substantially more generous, he said yesterday.

Despite a Quality of Life report out this week which battered the comfortable image of the Garden City, Professor Earl said he had always found the Christchurch lifestyle and cultural life very attractive. "I can see the mountains from the university but I'm not getting the chance to enjoy them. To remain competitive internationally I'm having to do much of my research and writing in my spare time," he said.

The scarcity of resources for tutoring and marking created a level of stress that made it hard to "switch off", he said.

Asked if New Zealand could afford to lose him, Professor Earl said organis-

ations such as Treasury, where some of his best students ended up, needed graduates who could deal with problems that had no easy answers or neat formulas.

"They soon realise that the way I taught them to think about economics is the way the world works," he said.

The quality of student educational levels were a major concern, he said.

"The top 10 per cent would hold their own with any students in the world but the general standard of literacy in the other 90 per cent has shocked me. I certainly worry about high schools."

The trend towards universities becoming training centres rather than educational centres had also influenced his decision to leave.