

Quotas squeeze Canadian Students

The student union of the University of Alberta has failed in its legal bid to quash enrolment quotas set by the university's administration.

The student union's case, which attacked the quotas on the grounds that they "violated the principles of fair play," was thrown out of court in late August.

The student union has decided not to appeal the case.

"The matter is not dead. The appeal is simply not going forward right now," said student union president Floyd Hodgins.

Hodgins, who accused council members of being afraid to "rock the boat," said he hopes the case will be pursued.

During the hearing, the union's lawyer argued that quotas, which are based on a system of marks, did not give students an equal chance at being accepted and thus violated the Alberta Bill of Rights.

The lawyer also argued that the rules laid out in the university calendar constituted university policy and meant they are part of a binding contract.

But the judge dismissed the lawyer's arguments, ruling that the setting of quotas is not a policy affecting first year admissions but is a sound financial decision.

Although Hodgins said earlier the board's approval of quotas lacks "morally and ethically correct reasoning", he declined to elaborate after the ruling.

"I have been instructed (by other executive members) not to reveal my personal opinions."

"It's a stink in my mind," he added. "I think they're infringing on my freedom of speech."

In late spring the administration stiffened minimum entrance requirements from 60 to 65 per cent and restricted first year enrolment to 4500.

Many institutions across the country have also been forced to impose stiff enrolment restrictions for the first time.

High school students are competing along with community college transfer students for the few spots available in already overcrowded universities. They are trying to return to school after suffering another summer unemployment rate of 20 per cent.

The competition is especially intense in Ontario. At the University of Toronto, more than 25,000 students have applied for only 6,300 spaces. At York University, which is accepting 200 fewer first year students in September, nearly 19,000 are vying for 4,700 spots.

Administrators at both universities say strained resources have forced them to close their doors.

Sheldon Levy, York associate vice-president, said inadequate government financing, cramped quarters and a desire to preserve the existing quality of education prompted the administration's move to restrict enrolment.

At the University of Alberta, nearly 2,000 students have been rejected. They failed to meet the university's new academic standards, which jumped from an aver-

age of 60 to 65 per cent this year.

The U of A student union recently took the university to court in a bid to remove the new standards. But an Alberta court judge ruled in favour of the administration, saying enough notice had been given to grade 12 students who would need summer school to boost their grades for admission.

At the University of Manitoba, 500 students seeking science de-

grees have been turned away. Restrictions are now in place there in every faculty except arts, said Desmond Bevis, director of admissions.

The University of B.C., which has pegged first year enrolment at 3250 students, has rejected 500 students who failed to make the grade standard of a C-plus average.

In St. John's, Newfoundland, Memorial University is thinking of limiting access in first year to 3000 students. But Ward Neale, Memor-

ial's vice-president academic, said no official decisions have been made.

Although total numbers of rejections were not available before the end of registration, thousands are also being turned away from colleges and technical institutes.

Beth Olley, Canadian Federation of Students chair, said accessibility for new students looks just as bleak as it did last year.

Grant for Women's Studies?

by Suzette C. Chan

University of Alberta VP Academic Amy Zelmer and an ad hoc committee of women academic staff have submitted an application to the Secretary of State for \$500,000 to establish a chair of Women's Studies for the Prairie region.

The grant money is available to a university wishing to set up a chair of Women's Studies for one of five designated regions.

Zelmer said she did not know the Secretary of State's program existed until she read that Mount St. Vincent was awarded the Atlantic region chair in April.

"When we sent a letter of intent (to apply for the grant) to Ottawa, they told us the final proposal had to be in by August 31. That was in July," says Zelmer.

Zelmer says a small group of women members of the academic staff members got together to

decide what would be in the proposal. One of the members was Margaret Armour, Faculty Service Officer of the Department of Chemistry.

"We would like someone who would do scholarly work, someone well-known to show that work done in women's areas could be of high calibre," Armour says. "There are also a lot of (women's studies) courses in various departments; it would be good to have someone coordinate them."

The committee also decided to send a joint application with the Athabasca University.

Zelmer adds that "normally, an endowed chair is labelled and filled with a full-time faculty member until she leaves." She says if the U of A won the grant, she would like the chair to stay for one to five years. "We could have someone representing a different discipline each term, for instance one in his-

tory, then sociology, engineering, and so on.

The committee also decided to apply for the grant jointly with the Athabasca University. Zelmer says "we'd have someone in to influence Athabasca (since the chair will represent the Prairies and the Northwest Territories).

Margaret Armour says the program should not be affected by a change in government. "The money has been put aside, so it should still be awarded, but it could mean the criteria (for winning the grant) could be different. I have no idea what would happen."

Zelmer says the government has not set a date on which the university would be able to learn if it has won the grant. "An advisory committee considering the application is to make recommendations about the middle of October. Cross your fingers for it."

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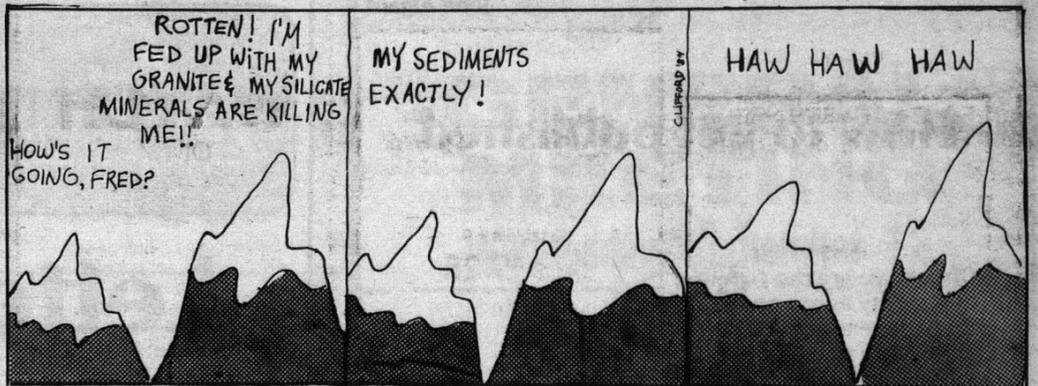
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