

BC grads in trouble

by Karen Gram
of Canadian University Press

VANCOUVER (CUP) — This September Susan Armstrong, an agriculture grad student at the University of British Columbia, found herself studying fish genetics under a cattle specialist, being robbed for tuition fees, and working almost 20 hours a week as a teaching assistant just to stay in B.C.

It didn't take her long to realize she was crazy. By January, she had packed her bags, left her lover, and headed for Guelph to study under a top-notch beef geneticist with

Since 1981-82, tuition fees have gone up 118 per cent at UBC, but TA wages have only increased six per cent. Wages have been frozen since 1982-83. As well, teaching assistant jobs are being spread more thinly now so there are fewer full assistantships and more three to six hour a week shifts. And grad students do not qualify for provincial loans.

"Obviously the money you're making won't even cover tuition," said Dafoe.

"If I was an undergraduate looking for a grad school, I certainly

have just agreed to relinquish their tenure during periods of financial duress.

"Morale is quite bad among faculty," said Phil Bennett, UBC Graduate Student Society president. "In a lot of the professional programs where there are industrial jobs, such as computer science or business, a lot of them are leaving."

Bill Hallam is an MBA student at UBC. He says there is a "tremendous demand" in the U.S. for business profs and that worries him.

"Every prof has at least half a dozen offers with considerably more money," said Hallam.

He said if faculty don't get a raise soon, "the really good people will leave and they are irreplaceable."

Universities are doing something to slow the departures at UBC. Tuition for next year's grad students will be decreased by almost six per cent from \$1800 to \$1700 to lure students in.

"They are obviously feeling desperate. They wouldn't lower fees if they were not feeling it," said Bennett. Second and third year students fees will increase four per cent each.

The drop in graduate students is worse in the "non-career" programs such as Arts, Humanities, and pure Sciences. His department - Astronomy - is down to four grads from a high of 10 in 1980.

"If I was an undergraduate looking for a grad school, I certainly wouldn't go here."

lots of research money. She isn't studying her chosen topic, but at least she can offer the time to research.

B.C.'s universities are desperate. Any more cuts and their academic credibility is out the window and even spectacular mountain panorama won't be able to keep scholars in the province.

Grad students are feeling the pinch particularly hard. With the highest graduate tuition fees in Canada, many are going elsewhere and many others would if the university would allow them to transfer.

UBC's graduate enrolment is down almost 15 per cent this year according to the Graduate Student Society. The grads have no trouble explaining why.

"The bottom line is cutbacks in funding," said Lynn Hissey, a Simon Fraser University communications grad.

John Dafoe, a political science grad, had two reasons. "Fees have gone up significantly and we're not getting the same level of support as we used to," he said.

wouldn't go here. I wouldn't advise anyone to stay in B.C."

SFU is also having trouble attracting grads. Although enrolment is up slightly, many of the department's first choices have opted for more stable universities.

Dr. Art Liestman, director of the new computing science graduate studies at SFU, noted reluctance to come to B.C. "Some of the individuals I offered positions to expressed concern about the situation here and some did indeed decide to go elsewhere," he said.

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"Grad students choose an institution often on the reputation of one professor," Dafoe said. "Then they come here to find he or she has resigned or been laid off."

An exodus of staff is now even more possible because UBC faculty

A lot of grad students would rather get research grants than TA jobs because it is more beneficial to them, but federal research grants have also been chopped.

"SSHRC (Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council) is in dire straits right now," said Bennett. He added, a lot of equipment is purchased with grant money.

The gay and lesbian nexus

by Sarah Millin
of the Ubysey
Canadian University Press

VANCOUVER (CUP) — Students are the focus of six workshops at the third annual B.C. gay and lesbian conference to be held at the University of British Columbia this month.

"The student track reflects our involvement in organizing the conference," said Damaris Sargent, co-chair of the conference and member of the Gays and Lesbians of UBC.

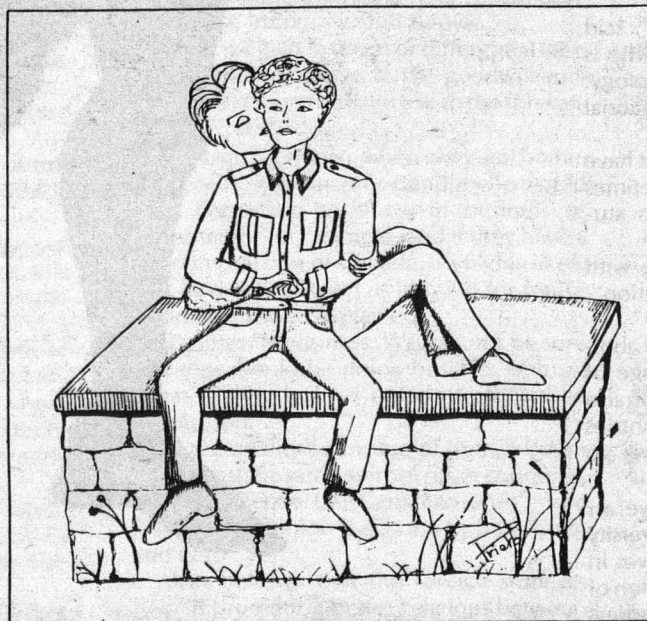
Gays and Lesbians of UBC have jointly organized the last two provincial conferences with the Vancouver Gay and Lesbian Community Centre. Ken Anderlini, former GLUBC president helped with the last two conferences.

"In the past years there was only one workshop dealing with youth and students," Anderlini said. "But last year, after working on the organizing committee and taking part in the conference, I went away feeling that if you hadn't been involved in the gay community for the past ten years, nobody really wanted to hear what you have to say."

"This year we made sure youth and students would have a voice. The result: a student track," he said.

"The six workshops deal with building membership, gay youth, lesbian/gay issues in student newspapers, men and women working together, providing services, and building a coalition," said Sargent.

Sean Bickerton, GLUBC president, will facilitate the coalition building workshop.



"The nexus is to establish an informal coalition of all gay student organizations in the Canadian west and American northwest," Bickerton said.

Conference organizers have planned three other tracks for the conference.

"This year we were faced with a unique situation in that there are three major issues affecting lesbians and gays nationally: AIDS, censorship, and pornography as it relates to the new customs act and recent seizures and section 15 of the Canadian Charter of Human Rights," Sargent said.

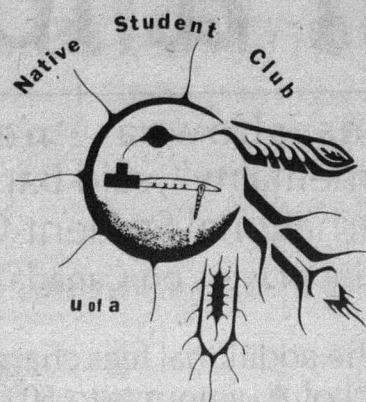
"The organizing committee felt that each of the issues were too important to be excluded from the conference so we decided to in-

clude them all," Sargent said.

"We're hoping that the active involvement of both women and students in the organization of the conference this year will draw in other groups, such as Gay Asians of Vancouver, who previously haven't been involved," she said.

Sargent said that bisexuality will probably be discussed in the workshops dealing with safe sex for gay and bisexual men and in workshops dealing with sexuality. Although workshops will reflect the needs and interests of the participants, she added.

The conference is wheelchair-accessible and interpreters for the hearing impaired will be provided on request, Sargent said.



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