



# The Gateway

photo: Ken Bird

*Construction on the second Education Building will not be halted due to the government's curbs on the University's expansion. It will, however, be reviewed by the government. All projects have been planned but are not yet under construction, will be postponed. Isn't the University lucky to have got the whole for this building dug just before the government's ultimatum?*

## Grass can stay . . . . . at least for now University expansion halted



W. D. Neal, Vice President,  
Planning and Development

We all know the university is short of floor space, right? We all know something should perhaps be done about it, right? Well, if the new Lougheed government has any say in the matter, we might just as well forget it.

You see, the government has tabled indefinitely all plans for new buildings, except those already in the planning stages. As far as those buildings already being built are concerned, the government wants the university to send in a "status report" on the progress being made.

A total of seven projects now underway must have status reports done on them, and five more projects still in the planning stages have been postponed indefinitely.

Needless to say, Planning and Development Vice-President W.D. Neal is rather upset. "Yes, we're extremely concerned about this development," he asserted. "We've had to tell architects to stop planning buildings which have been in the works for a couple of years now. What the government's directive means is that we have to stand still regarding development indefinitely.

Dr. Neal said that if at some future date the government decides to go ahead with some of these projects anyway, it will cost more to carry them out than it would if they were allowed to proceed unhindered. "For one thing, construction costs are rising by about 7-10 per cent per year; also, grinding the planning mechanism to a halt and then starting it up again costs money.

"I hate to think what will happen if the

government tries to kill any of the projects already in the building stages. We'll be in a hell of a mess if they do that — the legal implications are immense, and it would cost us a fortune to buy off existing contracts."

Dr. Neal mentioned that there was something else again that the university had to worry about. "Actual capital construction is the only part of our capital works program that's affected," he said. "In addition to building, we spend about \$9-10 million annually on equipping and furnishing new buildings, renovating and improving existing buildings, improving the university physical plant, and the like. Right now we're just keeping our fingers crossed that they won't try to interfere with that part of the budget. For example, the old arts building and the old medical sciences building both need some renovations, and if the government were to cut back on our renovations budget, it could be pretty serious.

Dr. Neal said he doesn't know how long it will be before the government makes any decision on the fate of the planned projects. "We may have to wait until the legislature opens and the budget is passed before we know anything; but in past years we've often been advised before the opening of the legislature what's been in the works for us. This of course would only be an estimate, and would require the approval of the legislature; but at least it would give us an indication of what's going to happen.

"In the meantime, the delays are hurting our plans. It's not as if we were planning for

students not already at university; the space in the planned buildings is needed right now, and we'd like to know what's going to happen as soon as possible. However, we have no choice but to cool our heels until the government makes a decision."

The fact that U of A enrolment has failed to live up to expectations for two years running now undoubtedly contributed to the government's decision to review all capital construction. Throughout the 1960's the university was accustomed to a 12 per cent annual jump in enrolment; however, both last year and this year increases were minimal, and enrolment was about 1000-2000 students below expectations. Therefore it seems highly unlikely that the university will reach the formerly predicted 25,000 enrolment by the middle of this decade; and when much of the planning affected by the freeze was started, it was assumed that such a level would be reached by about 1975.

Be that as it may. However, Dr. Neal claims the university requires an additional 500,000 square feet of floor space immediately. "That's why we're so concerned because the university is at this moment overcrowded," said Dr. Neal.

But take heart, claustrophics. At least now what little green space that remains on the campus will remain just that — space and not more concrete — for a while at least.

Perhaps, though, what we need is a new campus.

by Dave McCurdy