

Students occupy education ministry office

BY SHARON BENNETT

VICTORIA (CUP) — Eight University of Victoria students staged an impromptu overnight occupation of the deputy Minister of Education's office last Friday night to protest a proposed 310 per cent tuition increase for international students at the University of British Columbia.

The demonstration began at 3 p.m. on Friday, March 21st, with over 20 students storming the office. Once inside, activists took over two desks and began phoning media outlets around Victoria and sending out press releases by e-mail.

Deputy Minister Don Avison was in session at the legislature but assistant Deputy Minister Shell Harvey met with three of the protesters to hear their demands.

UVic student leaders expressed their outrage about the UBC tuition increase, as well as their concerns about the mounting

funding pressures at UVic.

"Our position is that there shouldn't be any differential fees for international students because what happens is only the wealthiest students from other nations are able to attend," said UVic student councillor Leigh Phillips. "This flies in the face of accessibility, which this government is supposed to be in favour of."

Harvey said that although the UBC tuition increase was large, it only brought the international students' fees up to par with the rest of Canada.

"It's not the position of the provincial government to get into commenting on the decisions of the boards," Harvey told protesters. "But there's two things I would note. First, the percentage increases that are reported at UBC certainly appear extremely high."

"Second point is, the absolute level, however, probably is right in about the national average," said Harvey. "The B.C. fees were

the lowest in the nation by quite a dramatic amount, apart from Quebec."

Phillips also expressed concern that the UVic administration would, like UBC, try some sideways moves to slip out the tuition freeze.

"Our own university, to get around the tuition freeze, has tried to increase ancillary fees," Phillips said. "They're looking to introduce an Athletics and Rec user fee, they have increased class sizes in english and biology, and now arts and science as a faculty is going to be cut nine per cent in each department."

"This is unacceptable; our education is suffering."

Harvey agreed that ancillary fees were not to be used as substitutes for tuition fees, and that the education ministry's guidelines on this point were quite clear and specific.

Unlike the Victoria protesters, who brought no provisions for an overnight stay, the 25 students

who marched into UBC President David Strangway's office on March 20th were equipped with sleeping bags, cooking facilities and food. Ten of those protesters occupied Strangway's office for five days.

The UBC Graduate Student Society says students there are protesting a recent 310 per cent increase in tuition fees for new international graduate students and a 200 per cent increase for returning grad students.

They also oppose new technology and athletics fees that they say go against the provincial government's tuition freeze.

"These students are the highest quality researchers from around the world who have been educated at their home country's expense and who are coming here to produce the highest quality research on behalf of UBC," said Makoto Fujiwara, a Ph.D student from Japan.

"These students cannot be

looked at simply as a source of revenue."

The UBC protesters are demanding that tuition increases for international students be revoked and that all new ancillary fees and increases be revoked. They also demand that a binding student referendum be held on all such fees in the future. Both the UBC and UVic protesters demanded that all protesters receive amnesty from legal or academic discipline.

After several of the angry UVic students met with assistant Deputy Minister Harvey, eight of the protesters decided to continue the occupation overnight in solidarity with the UBC occupation.

Harvey made it clear that if the protesters chose to stay, they risked arrest and would not have access to the phone over the weekend. However, ministry officials opted to hire security guards to watch the protesters overnight, warning them they had to leave by noon on Saturday.

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Pay equity is a reality

BY HANNAH SCISSONS

REGINA (CUP) — After 20 years, equal work will finally mean equal pay for Saskatchewan government workers.

A new pay equity policy being implemented in government-related jobs is based on equal pay for work of equal value, says Janine Reed, pay equity advisor for the Saskatchewan Women's Secretariat.

Although the government announced the new policy on International Women's Day and pointed to it as a commitment to women's issues, those involved with implementing the policy stress that it involves more than just women.

"The new job evaluation tries to break down the key elements of the jobs," said Reed.

The gender-neutral job evaluation will assign points under the categories of skill, education, responsibility and workload. The employees will then enter into a collective bargaining process to attempt to make jobs with similar points have similar pay.

The Worker's Compensation Board is the first to implement the new policy, finalizing the process in the middle of March. Wage adjustments will begin in April.

In a dinner speech, Joanne Crofford, Minister responsible for the Status of Women, announced that the evaluation process at the Board had resulted in \$10,000 pay increases for some women.

Donalde Ford, assistant director of the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission, says the adjustments are a good start, but the government needs to address the private sector as well.

"It's a start. To be completely

satisfactory it has to go further than just the government agencies," Ford said. "It's not going to help the thousands of women working in the private industry."

The government is proud of the small steps it is taking. In an address to the Saskatchewan Legislature, MLA Doreen Hamilton announced the new policy, concluding, "It is by such small, incremental steps as these that equality will one day be achieved."

Pay equity has been part of the Canadian Human Rights Act since 1977. It addresses the concern that traditional women's jobs are paid less than traditional men's jobs which are essentially equivalent in worth.

Provinces such as Ontario and Quebec have enacted proactive

legislation to address pay equity problems, while some provinces such as Newfoundland and British Columbia have gone with collective bargaining strategies.

Wilf Herzog, Human Resources Consultant at the Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology — which will be implementing the new policy later in the year — says Saskatchewan's approach is probably better than other provinces.

"It's not just a gender issue perspective — it addresses pay equity in all aspects," says Herzog.

However, he is hesitant to say what he expects from the new policy.

"At the end of the day the changes may not be that significant," he says.

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with parent companies in the States," said Callinan.

The bill has had its first reading and is scheduled to be given to a committee on April 8th. After that there will be debate and public hearings and the committee will give their report to Senate. At present, there are no dates set for these events.

"We are strapped for time in fighting this," said Callinan.

The Eastern Association of College Stores (EACS) will be starting a postcard campaign in protest of the amendment. The postcards will be available at universities across the country for students to sign. Lassaline hopes students will jump into the fray.

"There is a student market out there for used books, some students completely depend on them. We have to make them realize that," she said.

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