

Funding sparks council debate

by Emma Sadgrove

A motion to deal with provincial government cutbacks in funding education caused a lengthy and heated debate in student council on Nov. 18



Edits

by John Watson

There was a tragic death reported in one of Edmonton's daily newspapers recently. It was that of a first-year student who killed herself.

Although the story made reference to the woman's apparent suffering from anorexia, the gist of the article was the university is a cruel and heartless institution. It went so far as to suggest there are almost no counselling services for students on campus.

This is wrong. There is no place in this city that has more or better counselling available.

There are services to assist students with registration, health problems, legal problems and the whole gamut of academic problems. There are also services to help with personal problems. Student Help is a prime one, the campus chaplains are another.

The city itself could never match the services available here on campus.

New students do not know what to expect from university life, and what they will have to put into living it. It can be a frightening experience.

I think everybody recognizes that life at university can be very stressful, especially in the first year. Both the university administration and the students' union do as much as they can to help deal with that stress.

SORSE, Student Orientation Services, works hard to introduce graduating high-school students to campus life and campus services.

Every new student is guided around campus. They are made aware of the services available, but it is up to the students to use them.

The university could not supply more complete services than it does now. To suggest this campus has no where to turn to for help is inaccurate and absurd.

V.P. External Michael Hunter put forward the motion that government funding to education keep pace with the province's yearly inflation rate.

Hunter urged everyone to support the motion so he could take it to the university senate with unanimous backing from council.

Several councillors suggested changes in the motion.

External Commissioner Ken Bosman moved to amend the motion by removing the word 'province'. Bosman said "the university's rate of inflation is higher than that of the province." He felt it would be better not to specify.

This amendment was defeated. V.P. Academic Craig Cooper then moved the motion be amended to read "at least the province of Alberta's rate of inflation."

This amendment was accepted by Hunter.

Bosman then turned the discussion toward quality of education by saying "money does not equal quality of education."

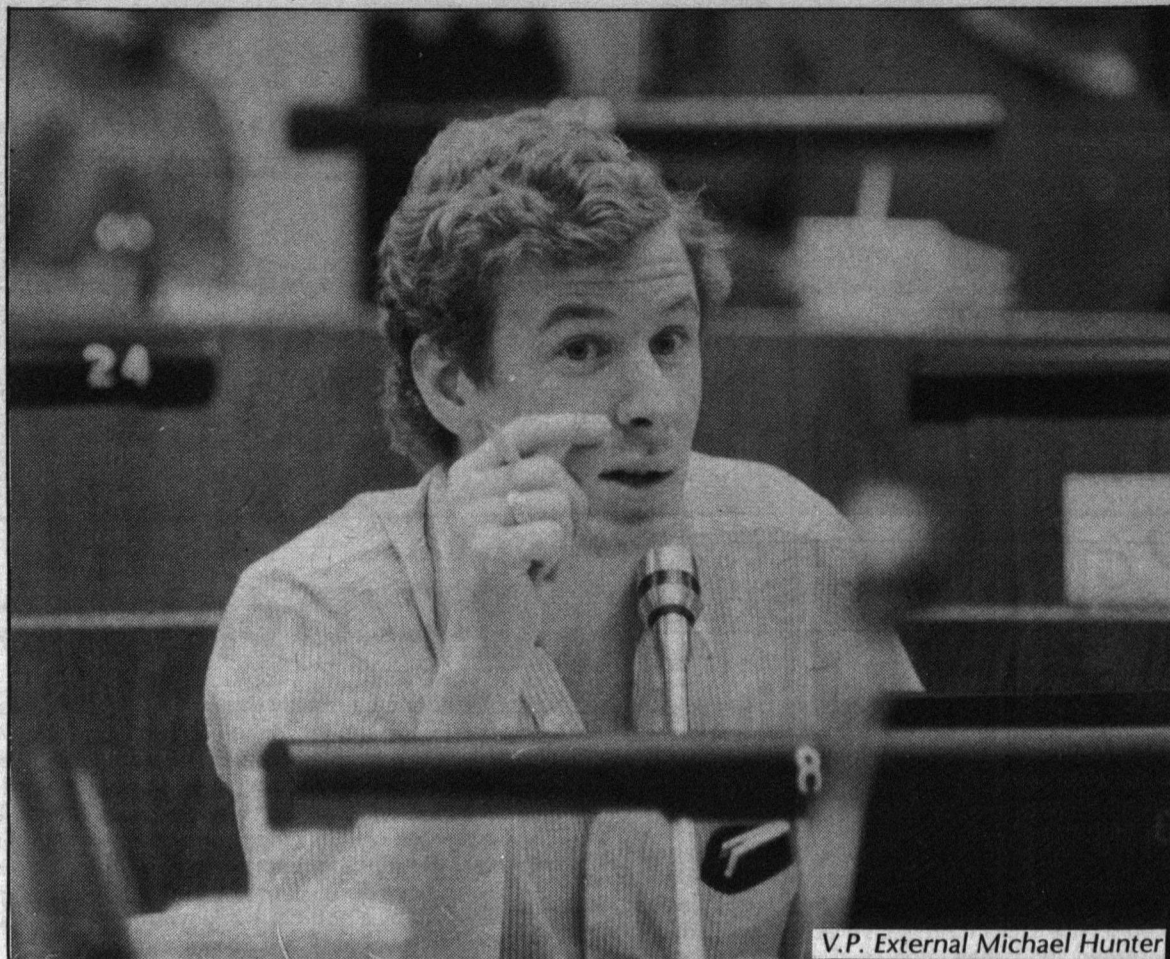
Bosman quoted funding figures from the University of Toronto and the University of British Columbia which both receive less funding than the U of A.

Toronto, for example, receives \$1.00 per student. The U of A receives \$1.43 per student.

"What are we buying with our 43 cents?" Bosman asked.

This led to discussion on comparable value and how quality can be judged. V.P. Finance Tim Boston referred to U of A's much larger heating bills due to climate.

Education representative Martin Badke said "I agree that money does not mean quality of education;



V.P. External Michael Hunter

however, I think we should support this motion." Badke's speech in favour of the motion prompted loud banging on tables by many members of council including Hunter and Cooper.

Arts rep. Rob Splane moved to amend the motion not to mention inflation, but just to state that the current quality of education be

maintained.

This amendment was defeated. When the vote was taken several councillors had already left and others were putting on their coats. The motion passed 24 - 5, with six abstentions.

One of the abstainers, Science rep. Gary Samek, said "I don't care." Two additions to the agenda were

not accepted and a motion to adjourn was passed while most councillors were already leaving the room.

Hunter said later "I wish that it could be unanimous."

"I think that we have a good working tool now in place with which we can address educational cutbacks."

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mer was the highest in the country, at 29.3 per cent. The rate does not account for the 'discouraged worker effect', or youth who have given up looking for work.

Problems are especially heavy for students from outside St. John's, said Reid.

"We know of students who weren't going to go home this summer because they knew they wouldn't find jobs," Reid said. "And we know of students who did, and can't

afford to come back to school, or won't because of cuts (to courses)." "We have students in limbo," he said.

A recently released study by a provincial commission found staggering cycles of unemployment, particularly in smaller communities. Among other things, the commission recommended better job programs for youth and more funding for Memorial, the province's only university.

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