

POLITICAL INTERFERENCE

Robichaud University Press Statement

Accused Of Pressuring Mackay

Weekend election campaign activity brought charges of political interference in student affairs at the University of New Brunswick. Accusations that Premier Robichaud had brought pressure to bear on President Mackay were reported in major Canadian newspapers. The premier denied the allegations and Mackay refused comment to members of the press. A university press statement later repudiated university policy.

The affair involved a demonstration which greeted Prime Minister Pearson on his Saturday arrival at Fredericton Airport. During the week posters appeared on the UNB campus urging students to picket Prime Minister and offering to provide free bus transportation to the airport. No sponsorship for the posters appeared on them, but the university press statement asserted that the UNB Progressive Conservative Club was responsible. The club's President, Paul Dick, was summoned to President Mackay's office, and was informed that "university facilities would not be available for the planned rally and demonstration." The interference was presumably the intention of the rally's organizers that those planning to picket meet on university property prior to leaving for the airport. Mr. Dick decided to cancel the provision of bus transportation and disassociated the PC Club from official sponsorship of the demonstration.

The pickets, however, did appear at the airport and later heckled speakers, including the Prime Minister, at Saturday's Liberal Convention. One of

them, Hartland North, a 22-year old Toronto student, was asked by the provincial Minister of Lands and Mines, Mr. Riley, to speak at the convention. He did so, charging that the New Brunswick government's budgeting for education was extremely inadequate and that it was wrong that tuition fees at UNB should be the second-highest in the country.

Students' comments to members of the press initiated efforts to determine whether political pressure had been responsible for cancellation of bus transportation to the airport. "Premier Robichaud," reported Monday's Toronto *Globe and Mail*, "admitted to reporters that he had called Dr. Mackay about the planned demonstration, but denied applying political pressure to prevent it."

The university asserted that its facilities could not be used by any organization "without the express permission of the university."

According to Art Pond, Campus Police Chief, the RCMP had contacted him about the demonstration. The purpose of the inquiry was to determine the size of the planned demonstration so that "crowd-control" could be adequately provided. Mr. Pond informed the RCMP that the demonstration was organized by Mr. Dick and the campus Progressive Conservative Club. He also told Mr. Dick of the RCMP call.

Major Canadian newspapers carried front-page reports of the affair. They referred to the existence of a "Pester-Lester" organization at UNB and linked the PC's and Christian Atheists to its "membership."

This was the University's position at press time. (Reprinted from *The Telegraph-Journal*, October 19)

FREDERICTON — R. W. McBrine, UNB public information officer, says "an attempt by the university's Progressive Conservative Club to make it appear that the whole student body was involved in a protest demonstration during the visit of Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson here Saturday" was squelched by university officials Friday.

Mr. McBrine said an attempt by PC Club President Paul Dick and other officers of the organization to "distort the facts" in regard to the source of the planned demonstration was discovered Friday. Mr. McBrine said that it was he who had brought the matter to the attention of University President Dr. Colin B. Mackay, who had acted in accordance with established university policy in forbidding the club "use of campus facilities to prepare and carry out the planned demonstration".

"Students are involved in many clubs during their years at university, and some of these clubs have a political affiliation," Mr. McBrine said.

University Policy

"It has always been university policy, that irrespective of the organization or the circumstances, that no organization is free to use university facilities without the express permission of the university.

"Mr. Dick had 1,400 or 1,500 printed handbills placed under vehicle windshields and in campus buildings.

"This was, of course, in direct violation of university policy.

"Mr. Dick was advertising a student rally to be held at the Memorial Student Centre on campus prior to taking the buses to the airport where Prime Minister Pearson was to arrive.

"In all of this, Mr. Dick never advertised the events as sponsored by the UNB Progressive Conservative Club, a clear distortion of the facts," Mr. McBrine said.

Mr. McBrine added that after

he had brought the matter to the attention of Dr. Mackay, Mr. Dick was informed that the university facilities would not be available for the planned rally and demonstration.

Demonstrations

Some members of the club went to the airport and later to the meeting of the New Brunswick Liberal Association where Prime Minister Pearson was speaking and carried out a series of demonstrations.

Mr. Dick later told newsmen Dr. Mackay had asked him to cancel the rally and airport buses under pressure from Premier Louis J. Robichaud. Premier Robichaud denied that he had applied any pressure on the UNB head.

"There is absolutely nothing to it," Premier Robichaud said.

Mr. McBrine said that he was sure Premier Robichaud was aware of the planned demonstration because "there is a Liberal Club on campus."

"And I am equally sure that it was I who brought the PC Club's plans to the attention of the president," Mr. McBrine said.

An Editorial:

Students' Rights

A minor demonstration which began as a lark has burst into an issue of unparalleled importance at the University. Premier Louis J. Robichaud acknowledged the event with a reaction far out of proportion to the importance of the demonstration itself. When he heard that students planned to meet the Prime Minister at the airport he telephoned Dr. Mackay.

According to a report in the Ottawa *Citizen*, "The premier was asked whether he asked Dr. Mackay to stop the demonstration. He first answered 'yes', then said: 'I didn't do that. I told him what the students had in mind. I told him I disapproved but it was up to him to take what steps he wanted.'"

Hence, through pressure on the University (despite his denials) the Premier took action to curb the activities of students. Paul Dick, after meeting with the President, complied with the suggestion that PC Club support for the demonstration be withdrawn.

The important point concerns our rights as students. Like other citizens we possess the rights of assembly and presentation of grievances. These are limited only in so far as they may interfere with those same rights of other citizens.

Clearly this rally could not do so.

The University has imposed a further limitation. We may not, without their express permission, exercise these rights on University property. This constitutes a veto over our political activities. At no time was it claimed that this was a University-endorsed rally. Clearly, even had bus transportation been provided and had the students met on University property, this would not have meant a University endorsement of the picketing.

We protest the University's restriction of our political activity. We object even more strongly to Premier Robichaud's unjustified interference in our affairs. And we deplore the fact that such important incursions into our rights have been occasioned by such an obviously minor event.