

Private funding threatens autonomy

by Mike Walker

Students' views were seriously split on the desirability of private sector funding of Alberta universities and colleges at the Federation of Alberta Students' annual general meeting last weekend.

The U of A delegation and others were firmly opposed to private funding as it is being encouraged by present Alberta government policy. The government has established an \$80 million fund to match private donations to post-secondary institutions dollar for dollar.

The University of Calgary led those in favor of private funding, arguing that post-secondary institutions should not reject an important source of funding.

U of A and University of Lethbridge delegates disagreed. Donations with strings attached, such as the recent donation of \$8 million from the NuWest Group Ltd. to the U of C earmarked for a Management building, will in the long run reduce the autonomy of the universities, they said.

The provincial government should adequately fund the universities itself, they said, not force them to accept the private sector's terms.

The pro-private funding delegates responded that many donors were not private corporations who would donate only to areas that generated profit to them, but philanthropic people who would donate to the humanities and the arts.

The U of A, U of L, and their allies eventually won with a weakly-worded motion advocating that all private donations to the universities be

put into a provincial pool to be matched by the provincial government.

The motion also states that private funding should never be seen as a replacement for public-

sector funding of the universities, and that the government has a

responsibility to ensure that universities are adequately funded by the public purse.



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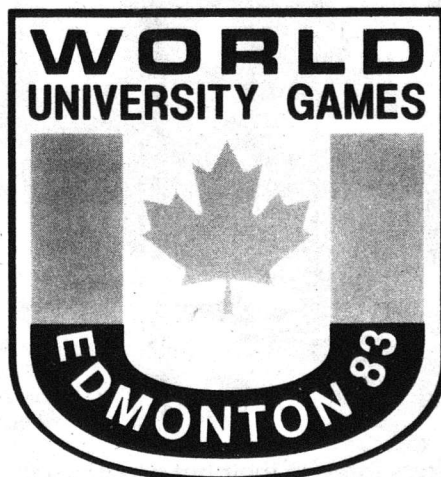
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