

Vancouver police criticized for treatment of activists

BY ALEX BUSTOS

VANCOUVER (CUP) — A University of British Columbia student charged with one count of mischief has accused the Vancouver Police Department of waging a war against social activists.

Jesse Scott, a 19-year-old philosophy major, was arrested Mar. 22 for allegedly scrawling on a Royal Bank window during a rally protesting student debt.

The arrest, which took place seven weeks after the January protest, was made at Vancouver's Canadian military drill hall just prior to an anti-war rally.

Scott says he believes the real purpose of the arrest was to scare off the anti-war protesters.

"My arrest was an act of intimidation," he said. "It's scary when [the police] have information on you and can use it when they want. It seems like a war on activists."

But according to Anne Drennan, spokesperson for the Vancouver

Police Department, Scott's arrest was due to chance rather than an orchestrated police campaign.

On Jan. 28, Scott was one of 1,500 protesters in downtown Vancouver who participated in the National Day of Action against student debt.

"We had an officer videotaping the demo," Drennan said, "which is standard in these demonstrations."

The videotape, she says, captured several protesters perpetrating acts of "vandalism".

Seven weeks later, the officer who filmed the Day of Action protest spotted Scott at the drill hall and, after recognizing him as one of the protesters on the videotape, arrested him.

When asked why Scott wasn't arrested earlier, Drennan replied, "There was no opportunity. There were over 1,000 people [at the January rally]. The officer couldn't get a chance to arrest him."

This explanation doesn't satisfy Milton Smith, the lawyer representing Scott.

Smith says the police know full well the mischief charge will probably be thrown out of court. The purpose of the arrest, he continues, was not to win in court, but rather to scare off potential protesters.

"It's a way of subverting the justice system," he said. "[The police] use their powers to punish someone without going to trial for exercising their right to exercise freedom of speech."

Smith says he is also concerned

with police filming protesters at rallies like the one last January.

"It's incredible that our tax dollars are being used to survey groups engaged in perfectly legal activities," he said.

B.C. budget shines down on post-secondary education

BY CRAIG SAUNDERS AND JAMIE WOODS

VICTORIA (CUP) — Thanks to accounting changes and an inflationary increase, B.C.'s budget gives a little more to universities, colleges and students.

While the overall budget for the Ministry of Advanced Education, Training and Technology increased by 0.7 per cent — approximately the projected rate of inflation — a shuffling of figures allows for a total of \$40-million in new funding for schools and student financial aid.

Advanced education minister Andrew Petter already announced these funding increases in a series of public appearances following his appointment in February. The announcements included a total of \$26-million to colleges and universities to offset inflation and create 2,900 new seats, and \$14-million more for student loans.

"I feel very positive," Petter said. "[While] we have cut substantially in other areas, we have increased [funding] in health, education and social spending.

"University spending will go up more than it has in the last two years," he said. "There are no miracles in this, it's just a matter of priorities."

Petter's positive outlook is shared by the province's largest student group, the Canadian Federation of Students (CFS), who are riding high after students won a tuition fee freeze in March.

"[The freeze] sends a message to institutions that tuition fee increases are not an ongoing source of revenue," Maura Parte, provincial chair for the federation, said.

"From the perspective of our

sector, it's hard not to be complimentary to the government for what it's done," Keith Reynolds, spokesperson for the College and Institute Educators' Association, said. "There's always more that could be done, but compared to what's happened everywhere else in the country, B.C.'s done an astonishing job."

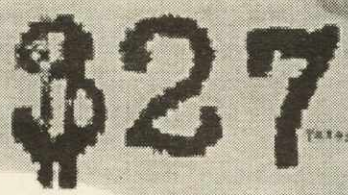
Reynolds' group represents the province's 22 colleges and university-colleges. Those institutions will receive funding to create 2,050 of the 2,900 new post-secondary seats for students that the province has promised to create. The remaining 850 will be created at the province's six universities.

Of the \$26-million in new operating funds, \$17.5-million will cover the new seats. Of the remaining \$8.5-million, \$3.8-million will go to

the new Technical University of B.C., and \$4-million will go to existing schools to help offset inflation and make up for revenue that could have been obtained through a tuition fee hike.

Overall, the government is budgeting a \$95-million deficit, despite a promise last year to balance the budget. The decreased deficit comes from a budget with no clear winners. Agriculture and Food will see a 23 per cent increase in their budget, but most of that money is earmarked for poor crop performance. The fisheries ministry is probably the biggest winner, with a 19.9 per cent increase.

Hardest hit are resource and environment departments which, with the exception of Agriculture and Fisheries, all saw cuts ranging from three to 20 per cent.

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 administration. That, to me, is really sad."
 Adams says he also understands the frustration students felt during the strike, but doesn't think the Students in Solidarity made a wise decision in supporting the faculty.
 "Students in Solidarity...is a small minority of Dal and King's students. Some [students] supported the DFA, some supported the administration, but the vast majority of students support each other — and it was those students that made a difference in the outcome of the strike."


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 May says if faculty continue to oppose a student presence at the bargaining sessions, he will again offer the student union a place on the administration's negotiating team.
 Student union president-elect Tracey O'Reilly says while she wants to have a student present at the negotiations, she is undecided about having that person sit on the bargaining team of one particular side.
 May says contract negotiations with faculty could commence as early as next fall.

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