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students fight 'political games'

The mood was exhilarated, the message "Power to the People", when about 400 students from Grant MacEwan Community College met to plan their protest of the government's failure to re-appoint Barry Moore, the chairman of the College's Board of Governors.

Faculty and student leaders have charged that the decision to replace Moore is political. A critic of the P.C. government and an NDP worker, Moore has been the chairman of the board since the college's inception three years ago. Minister of advanced education Jim Foster claims not to have known about Moore's political affiliations until after the decision was made.

"What boggles me," Moore explained yesterday in a telephone interview "is that in most schools there is no love lost between students, faculty and Board of Governors." But at Grant MacEwan that is not the case. Both students and teachers have already sent letters to the government requesting Moore's reappointment.

The decision not to re-appoint Moore, was based on discussions of the entire cabinet. The reason for the move has not and apparently will not be revealed, but Moore was assured that it had nothing to do with the quality of his work.

Amongst signs reading "We want education NOT political manipulation" "Students demand rights" and "We want more Moore", the students at the rally decided to write individual letters of protest instead of a single petition. The consensus was that a stack of letters would be more impressive than a single petition. The letters, written at the rally, are to be delivered to the government tomorrow.

If the letters fail, the students are prepared to send a delegation or go to the legislative buildings en masse.

The decision to send letters was a compromise between the "radicals" and the "moderates." At first, the group was ready to rent buses immediately and leave for the office of Jim Foster, minister of advanced education. Strikes and picketing were also suggested. "Remember Red Deer," one speaker challenged.

Several speakers including the chairman and president of the student union, Rick Mulcaster, emphasized that it was a matter of government intervention into education and not simply of the government ignoring the wishes of the students' and teachers at one school. Mulcaster cited the appointment of F.T. Jenner to the Board of Governors of the U of A as an example of the P.C.'s policy of placing their supporters in important educational positions.

Insisting that "education is our first priority," Mulcaster charged that the government was "playing political games" by refusing to re-appoint "a man that they know is bloody well good."

Keith Lang, student representative on the board, praised Moore as "twice the man they have at other colleges. This man will lead us in the proper direction." When someone called out the government won't be able to find an adequate replacement, the audience responded with applause and cheers.

The strongest plea for caution came from Jack Allen, a member of the teaching staff. He argued that the students should give the government time to reconsider the decision not to re-appoint Moore. According to Allen, Foster who is presently in Winnipeg, told an interviewer on CBC radio this morning that a final decision had not been made. Allen cited this as an indication that the cabinet would reconsider its decision.

Allen's voice of moderation was doubled by Ted Kemp, a former U of A prof, who now teaches at the college. Kemp acknowledged that "this is just the time when the college needs continuity in its chairman," but he recommended giving Foster "a chance to do the right thing."

The rally chose the letters as "a nice polite way to let the government know how we think," the faculty association is preparing a petition.

Not everyone was satisfied with the scope of the protest. A recurring theme at the rally was that the students and staff should choose the college's leader because "they're the people". One staff member asked "Why are we so meekly accepting the re-appointment of Ed Stack?", another member of the Board whose re-appointment was recently announced "Shouldn't we be questioning the whole issue of government appointments?" the teacher asked.

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