

CROSS-CANADA BRIEFS

Creationism banned from BC science classes

BY ANDRE MAYER

TORONTO (CUP) — A decision by the British Columbia provincial government to ban the teaching of creationism in the province's science classes has elicited angry reactions from at least one school board. BC education minister Art Charbonneau announced Sept. 7 that provincial curriculum guides had been revised, to eliminate the teaching of creationism in science classes.

Creationism, a belief that God created the earth, has been taught in grade 11 and 12 biology classes alongside evolution theory in Abbotsford schools since 1983.

Abbotsford, a city of 104,000 people, is located 70 km East of Vancouver. In a letter to the chairperson of the Abbotsford school board, the minister required the board to comply with the changes by Sept. 15, or the board would be dissolved. According to the ministry, the board's previous curriculum infringed upon the province's School Act, which states that "no religious dogma or creed shall be taught in school." But Paul Chamberlain, vice-chairman of the Abbotsford Board of Education, says the minister clearly overstepped his bounds.

"[Our] school board was the victim of a vicious intrusion by the [education] minister," he said.

Chamberlain says the recent decision is the result of the "present minister's outright opposition to creationism."

The board will comply with the new curriculum guidelines, but they are not happy about it, says Chamberlain.

Immigration change threatens visa student's health care

BY JEFF OLIVER

WINNIPEG (CUP) — A change in federal immigration legislation intended to help international students has resulted in some of them losing their provincial health care benefits. According to Dr. Lyle Eide, director of the International Centre for Students (ICS) at the University of Manitoba, international students were eligible for health coverage if they obtained a work authorization permit, which allowed them to work in Canada.

On July 26, the federal government announced that they had eliminated the need for work authorization documents, allowing international students to work on campus without obtaining any formal permission from the government. However, the province does not provide health coverage unless the work authorization is granted. Eide said that because students must have some form of health coverage, they have been forced to purchase private policies.

For a single person it costs approximately \$360 per year. For a family, it may cost upwards of \$1200 per year. According to Bob Harvey from Manitoba Health, international students were never eligible for health coverage.

Some students "slipped through the cracks" by claiming they were in Canada on work authorization, not on a student visa, said Harvey. Harvey said that approximately 90 per cent of all international students already have their own health insurance and are not eligible for provincial health coverage because they are classified as visitors to the country.

Old profs strain universities according to study

BY DAVID ALAN BARRY

TORONTO (CUP) — Aging professors are responsible for stagnation and financial strain on the Canadian university system, says Carleton University professor Edward Renner.

Renner conducted a study, which was released last week, that examines the demographics of 9,000 faculty members at nine Canadian universities.

According to Renner, a large number of faculty were hired in the 1960s and 1970s to meet the high university enrolment numbers of the post-war baby boom.

The 58-year-old professors say many of the same faculty members are still working at Canadian universities today.

"These professors are still teaching," said Renner. "[Now] they are teaching the children of the baby boomers."

According to the study, the majority of faculty at Canadian universities — 61 percent — were born before 1945. Another 36 percent were born between 1945 and 1960. Only 2.8 per cent were born after 1960.

Renner says the large salaries these professors draw are putting a financial strain on universities at a time when resources are scarce. To solve this problem, Renner suggests older faculty members be encouraged to take early retirement, opening up employment opportunities for younger professors.

But the solution is not that simple, says Bill Graham, president of the University of Toronto's Faculty Association. Though there are professors retiring, universities are not hiring new full-time faculty.

Glen Brown, communications officer with the Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations agrees.

"We do have a crisis. [But it's] more a matter of hiring rather than an age bulge," he said.

AIDS Walk raises \$25,000

Turn-out down from last year

BY ANDREW SIMPSON

The fifth annual AIDS Walk took place on Sunday, October 1 on the Halifax South Commons. The event, organized by the AIDS Coalition of Nova Scotia, drew a diverse crowd of 500 men, women, children and students.

The AIDS Coalition press release indicated that "THE WALK will be a pledged show of support for people infected and affected by HIV/AIDS. Every step will be echoed simultaneously in 40 communities across our country as others also take steps to raise AIDS awareness and raise money."

Here in Halifax, the crowd was down in numbers from last year by about half, but was not lacking in spirit. They were welcomed by two radio personalities who managed to evoke a cheer, even when announcing the local politicians in attendance.

Nova Scotia Premier John Savage pledged "continuing support for persons infected with HIV and AIDS."

Savage then stood by as AIDS Coalition President Wilson Hodder criticized the government's funding policies for treatment of persons with AIDS.

"I challenge this government to stop supporting Mono-therapy and to recognize combination therapy," said Hodder. "Combination-therapy saves lives, Mono-therapy kills people."

Hodder, in an interview, ex-

plained that it is the government's policy to provide funding for the use of only one drug and one method of treatment to each patient.

"It has been medically proven again and again, that a combination of different therapy's will save lives," said Hodder. "Convincing the government, it's like chipping away at the Berlin wall bit by bit, eventually we will make our breakthrough."

After the speeches, Premier Savage found his niche. Looking slightly more comfortable than before, Savage danced to "Mustang Sally" in an upbeat warm-up lead by aerobics instructors from a local fitness club. The festive mood continued as the crowd was led by police escort down Quinpool Rd. towards Oxford St. When the participants completed the 10-kilometre walk and returned to the Commons, they were treated to live music from McGinty and a barbecue.

"I think this is a great event," said Tim Follett, a student and walk participant. "Even people without pledges or donations can contribute. When hundreds of marchers clog a city street, you are going to make people take notice, and getting the word out is half the battle."

Event organizers estimate that approximately \$25,000 was raised.

"With continuing donations and pledges arriving over the next few days, our total should rise to

around \$30,000," said Hodder.

Although the event was organized by The AIDS Coalition of Nova Scotia, there were also 12 partner organizations who participated and will share in the proceeds: Black Outreach Project, CARAS, HIV/AIDS Survival Programme, Mainline Needle Exchange, Men's Sex '95, Morton Memorial AIDS Foundation, Pictou County AIDS coalition, Planned Parenthood of Nova Scotia, Safe Harbour Food Bank, Stepping Stone, AIDS and Women, AIDS Project, and The Rob McCall Foundation for AIDS.

The AIDS Coalition of Nova Scotia directly helps about 130 people with HIV/AIDS to receive treatment and counselling.

"We know of about 230 people in Nova Scotia who have AIDS and are aware of it," said Hodder. "I hate to guess at numbers like this but there could be up to 5000 people living in the province with HIV or AIDS who don't know it."

When asked about AIDS in the university communities, Hodder said that he was aware of students at both Dalhousie and St. Mary's who have recently tested positive.

"I don't think there are any specific services for these students at their schools. The problem is that like in the rest of society, there are many more walking around unaware that they have HIV or AIDS, than those who are aware of it."

UBC Senate debates 'chilly climate' allegations

VANCOUVER (CUP) — The University of British Columbia's most powerful academic body has finally entered the 'chilly-climate' debate.

The debate began last summer when lawyer Joan McEwen released a report that stated the university's political science department was rife with racism and sexism.

In June, UBC president Dr. David Strangway responded to the report by suspending admissions to the department's post-graduate program.

Since then, Strangway's decision has been debated by the university's graduate students society and the faculty members of the department of arts.

Now, the University Senate is involved.

At a senate meeting on September 20, acting Chair of Political Science, David Elkins, delivered a speech critical of both the report and the university's actions, while the Dean of Graduate Studies, John Grace, defended the decision to suspend graduate admissions to the department.

The senate also received notice of a motion asking them to rescind the decision and effectively re-open admissions to the department. The senators will vote on the motion during their October 18 meeting.

Reading from a lengthy prepared statement, Elkins spoke of the "impossible situation" his "deeply divided" department finds itself in.

"Not only have we been accused of many failings, our efforts at reform have often been portrayed as proving the very defects we endeavoured to eliminate," he said.

"This puts us in a no-win situation. If we do little, we are seen as intransigent; if we undertake major changes, this proves we have problems."

Elkins called on the Senate, as the university's chief academic body, to "exercise leadership in resolving the tragic situation in which [his] department and the entire university now find themselves."

Elkins defended the department's record on equity reform, and urged that the decision to lift the

embargo on graduate admissions be made on the basis of "good faith efforts" rather than waiting for departmental reforms to be completely in place.

"I submit that we have already demonstrated much good faith based on our progress to date," he said. "Thus, the time to lift the sanction is now rather than in a few weeks or months."

Speaking in response to Elkins, the dean of graduate studies defended the decision to close admissions and warned that lifting the suspension would send a negative message to students.

"The suspension has crystallized the attention of the department on the issues that need to be considered," Grace argued.

Grace said he fears lifting the embargo will take pressure off the department to reform.

The dean acknowledged that McEwen's report was not without flaws, but said it outlined serious problems that could not be ignored.

Grace challenged Elkins' claim that the political science department had made positive steps toward equity prior to McEwen's inquiry, citing the department's "unresponsiveness" to graduate student complaints of racism and sexism within the department dating back to the fall of 1993.

The dean also told the Senate that the suspension imposed last June has yet to seriously affect admissions to the department; admissions for the 1995 academic year had been made prior to the report's release and students seeking admission for next year would not be admitted before February 1996.

"The suspension is a symbolic act," Grace said.

In a progress report submitted to the Senate, Grace said he was hopeful the suspension on admissions could be lifted in time for new students to be admitted to the program in the new year.

Grace also reported that a thirteen-member advisory committee formed to advise him on equity issues is currently monitoring the steps being taking in the political science department, and will make recommendations on the criteria used to decide when the suspension can be lifted.