

Regina board attempts to censor Carillon

REGINA (CUP) — The board of governors of the University of Saskatchewan, Regina campus, has declared war on the Regina student union as the ultimate step in a two-year campaign to establish censorship over the student newspaper, the Carillon.

Administration principal W.A. Riddell announced December 31 that the university board of governors would refuse to collect student union fees, and, in effect, attempt to starve the union into imposing editorial control over the paper.

The decision to stop fee collection was made without consultation with either students or faculty.

A board of governors press release explained the action by claiming the Carillon "has pursued an editorial policy clearly aimed at undermining confidence in the senate, board of governors and the administration of the university."

The board has tried to pressure the council into censoring the Carillon for over a year, a student union statement explains, but the council has resisted, claiming the board has no right to interfere into student affairs; the allegations against the paper are untrue; and control of the Carillon by the council might be used for undemocratic purposes.

The student council has warned the board action may be the result of pressure from the provincial government of Ross Thatcher. "It is no secret that Ross Thatcher has little love for students," the statement said.

The statement is part of a three-page letter sent to all Regina students, who had not yet returned to the campus from Christmas holidays. Also included in the letter is a break-down of the union budget, and a statement of support for the union from both the men's and women's athletic boards at the university.

The board action has been criticized by Saskatchewan opposition leader Woodrow Lloyd, who said it had "neither the right nor the obligation" to halt criticism at the university.

"When authority resorts to such throttling it violates the general public right of freedom of

speech and freedom of assembly," he said.

Regina faculty association president Reed Robertson has termed the move "stupid" and "silly" and accused the board of "using a fiscal sledgehammer to impose censorship."

The students have called an emergency general meeting for Wednesday to consider the board action and develop further strategy for the union. The board's starvation tactic is also expected to be discussed at a meeting of the executive of the Regina faculty council the same day.

The student council has already rejected the board's decision, and has promised to fight the affair to the finish.

A five-point program adopted by the union calls for public education on the issue, the freezing of all expenditures not involved with union defense, mass meetings on the campus and contact with other groups including Saskatchewan farm and labor organizations and the Canadian Union of Students for financial and moral support.

The student union accused the board of governors of opting for "a policy of confrontation rather than reasonable negotiation" in connection with the issue.

In a press statement, the union termed the action "an infringement of the legal rights of the students to organize an independent union under student direction and free from outside control. It is an intolerable attempt to impose censorship on the Carillon and to deny the students their right to a free press."

Although the board has made no effort to pinpoint its objections to the Carillon's editorial policy, an identical threat to the union was made by Riddell last March.

The threats followed closely upon an issue of the Carillon which broke the story of a \$1,000 student loan granted to Allen Guy, presently minister of public works in the Saskatchewan government. At the time of the loan, Guy was drawing an MLA's salary. Accusations were levelled at Riddell during the incident, claiming he had attempted to stop the printing of that issue of the paper.

Riddell and the board confronted the student council following publication of the story with threats of non-collection of student fees. The issue, according to Riddell, was "the effect of the editorial policy of the Carillon on public opinion towards the university."

The Carillon was following -- and still follows -- a consistent editorial policy of opposition to the provincial government's proposals of changes in relations between the government and the university, student loan policy, and budgeting policy toward both Saskatchewan universities.

The board's threats ceased after the Carillon's case was taken up by an academic freedom committee of the Regina faculty council. The committee issued no report.

This year, the Carillon incurred Riddell's wrath when it disclosed top-secret plans for cut-backs in the university budget for the 1969-70 year; which will either limit enrollment or cause a steep rise in the student faculty ratio at the university. The budget cut would also virtually eliminate night classes and halt expenditures on laboratory facilities and equipment.

At that time, Riddell accused the Carillon of "gross irresponsibility" in reporting the budget situation, and said that if he could find the source of the leak, "heads would roll."

The board's decision to starve the union to a settlement came as a complete surprise both to members of the Regina student council and to members of the Carillon staff, who had concluded a verbal agreement with the board to collect fees for the coming semester. The council is currently studying legal action against the board for breach of contract.

The board's decision, according to the press release, is not irrevocable. "The door remains open for discussions and negotiation between the student union and the board. Any new arrangement, however, will have to be based on clear-cut understandings and agreements."

A subsequent interview with Riddell revealed that these "understandings and agreements" would have to include the introduction of a "policy board" to set editorial policy for the paper. According to Riddell, the board could consist entirely of students.

"This is not the idea of introducing censorship," Riddell said, "but there is a difference between criticism and what the Carillon is doing."

Riddell has stated that he "does not care" what actions are taken by Regina student union in response to the board actions, and that he will give students "plenty of time" to bow to the board's position.

"It will be very interesting to see what support they have and where it comes from," he said.

He also claims no responsibility for any escalation of the conflict which may occur, including the possibility of a student strike, now being considered by the union.

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