

The Projector is Dead

Tuesday, May 5, 1981

WINNIPEG (CUP) — When is a student newspaper not the student newspaper?

According to the Red River College Students who run the Free Times, it's when the newspaper's content is directly controlled by student politicians.

The Free Times was created last May by former staff of the Red River newspaper, the Projector, who quit in protest when the Red River Students' Association (SA) installed its communications director, Norm Fontaine, as Projector editor.

The SA executive failed twice last March to win Student Council approval to shut down the Projector. On their third try, council agreed to replace editor Burton Robson with the SA's communications director.

The paper's staff resigned and were immediately locked out of their offices.

"Ever since the paper created a fairly democratic structure, relations with the SA simply

Free Times

Red River Community College's independent students' newspaper

Council seizes paper control

"never have been good," says Free Times staff member Penni Mitchell.

The newspaper staff and SA executives have fought bitterly in recent years over the Projector's content. The SA accused the paper of using obscene language, of irresponsibility, and of being unrepresentative of Red River students.

"They've got people on that staff with green hair," says SA President Steve Dawson. "You call that representative?"

Former Projector staff counter that the "obscene language" in question was in a quote from a Red River administrator. They say the SA took over the newspaper because it was too critical of the SA and Red River administration.

Free Times staff printed an issue in May protesting the SA's takeover. They organized a forum on the issue, which attracted 600 students, most of whom supported the Free Times. The forum

received substantial coverage in the Winnipeg commercial media.

The Free Times also circulated a petition asking the SA to repeal its decision. The petition was signed by over 600 students during a three-day campaign.

The SA is committed to publishing the Projector, and had threatened to prevent distribution of "the illegal newspaper" at the college.

The Projector will be paying writers 25 cents per inch for stories. The newspaper's layout has been contracted out to non-students.

The Free Times' fight with

the SA has been supported by members of Canadian University Press, a national cooperative of student-run newspapers. CUP member newspapers have pledged their support, including much-needed cash. The national office of CUP is also supplying money. The Free Times is using the layout facilities of the University of Winnipeg student newspaper, the *Uniter*.

Free Times staff hope to win Student Council support for a referendum to make it the official newspaper of Red River college and to guarantee its editorial autonomy. Failing that, they plan to collect enough signatures in a petition to force a referendum.

The Free Times is optimistic that students will respond to the chance to control their own newspaper and to sit as a watchdog on the SA, although no staff will be paid.

"Morale is really high," says Free Times staff writer Kathi Thorarinson. "We've gotten a lot of support from students, and the staff is really excited about the chance to run our own paper free from control by the Students' Association."

1973 saw a similar dispute here at the U of A. After the Students' Union failed to ratify the appointment of a new editor chosen by the staff, the staff members of the *Gateway* printed several strike issues before leaving in protest to form the *Poundmaker*.

The *Poundmaker* produced in a house in Garneau, ran for three years. Not too concerned with campus news, the *Poundmaker* eventually became a sort of Edmonton underground newspaper until it ceased publishing in 1976.

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