

# Memorial Students Occupy Building

ST. JOHN'S (CUP) — About 1,500 students at Memorial University occupied the arts and administration building today (Nov. 14) to back demands the administration reverse its position and continue compulsory collection of student union fees.

Memorial president, Lord Stephen Taylor, announced unexpectedly last Thursday (Nov. 9) the university would no longer collect fees for the union. The move would effectively cripple the student organization.

Taylor timed his move for the first day of Memorial's five-day mid-term break. So students had to wait until today before taking fully constructive action.

The first move was the organization of a general student union meeting at noon, when about 3,000 students gathered to discuss the crisis. The number was considered remarkably large for the usually apathetic campus, which sports an enrolment of 7,500.

The students overwhelmingly voiced opposition to the administration. Although only a small minority opposed the union and any decision to occupy the administration building, more than 1,000 students marched to the building to begin the occupation.

The action marked the first student occupation of a Canadian university building in the 1972-73 academic year.

They occupied Taylor's office, as well as those of the comptroller, vice-president and others. They then waited for Taylor to return from a lecture he was giving engineering students. (The president, a member of the British House of Lords, still teaches an engineering course.)

When Taylor came back he was flanked by about 15 engineers who said they opposed the Council of the Student's Union (CSU), the elected student government, in its present form, and supported Taylor's action.

Taylor said he would allow the engineers into his office and would talk with demonstrating students two at a time. They refused the offer and Taylor left the building.

A series of proposals and counter-proposals followed in an attempt to agree on a means of negotiation.

Taylor, who at first had allowed only two students into his office, agreed to meet a four-member negotiating committee of students, provided the occupiers vacated the buildings. They vociferously refused and the stalemate continued, with the students remaining in the building through the night. They were prepared to stay as long as necessary.

Some students brought in donuts, soft drinks, coffee, fried chicken and sandwiches through the day to feed the hungry demonstrators. A local folksinger entertained with such songs as "Get Together" and "Power to the People". Previously, students had joined together in several rousing rounds of "Solidarity Forever."

The burser's office, registrar's office and several other administrative branches closed for the afternoon, although the vice-president's office was the only one which was occupied for more than an hour.

Outside, the university's flags

were lowered to half-mast.

Local police took no immediate action, although a couple of plainclothesmen were keeping a close watch on the occupation. Campus security officers locked as many doors as possible, but otherwise did little except to observe.

A series of telegrams and phone calls of support gave the occupiers a strong morale boost. The student unions at Dalhousie University, the University of Manitoba, the University of Prince Edward Island and the College of Trades and Technology in St. John's declared their solidarity. So did the local bus drivers' union currently on strike against St. John's City Council.

Some workers in the administration building also said they sympathized with the students' cause.

The Memorial students say Taylor and the administration had no right to decide unilaterally to terminate student union fees collection. No negotiations had preceded the

action. They feel the decision whether student union fees are compulsory or voluntary should be made by the students, not the administration.

CSU executive members say Taylor treats students "like little children". They accuse him of making threats, breaking promises, and engaging in "under-the-table" deals.

Last Friday (Nov. 10) about 40 students showed up at CBC Radio's St. John's studios, where Taylor was taping an interview. The taping was interrupted once by loud student protests, but then proceeded.

The Human Rights Association of Newfoundland and Labrador attacked Taylor's action, terming the discontinuation of compulsory collection of student union fees and "infringement on the freedom and rights of the students at the university."

The Memorial struggle is sharply reminiscent of the so-called Carillon crisis at the University of Saskatchewan,

Regina campus in early 1969.

The then-Liberal Saskatchewan government was upset with several embarrassing articles in the Regina campus student newspaper, the Carillon. Through its representatives on the university board of governors, the government tried to cripple the paper by ordering the termination of compulsory student union fees collection. The Carillon could only survive with a union grant.

Students mounted a strong campaign against the board's obvious infringement of freedom of the press. They held an all-night general meeting in a university building, threatened occupations, enlisted the support of prominent individuals and groups across the province, and distributed a province-wide special issue of the Carillon, attacking big-business domination of the board.

The students forced the administration into a humiliating retreat and saved the union.



Claire Colhane speaking at Indo-China meeting. (Charles Gosling/Dal photo)

## Graduate Meeting

by Kathleen Agosta

The second meeting of the graduate student council was held on November 13 at 7:30 p.m. The meeting was attended by ten council members and a number of graduate students.

T. Akin, commerce student, was elected vice president. J. Cunningham, past treasurer, reported on the present financial standing of the association and then turned over his books to G. MacIntyre, the newly appointed treasurer. MacIntyre and the finance committee were to meet during the following week to prepare a budget which would be presented at the next council meeting.

C. MacGregor was officially

appointed house manager with a monthly salary of \$20. Under his supervision the residents of the house would be asked to take over the responsibilities of keeping the beer machine filled.

Records, dartboard and ping-pong equipment are available for use by members of the association and may be obtained from the graduate student on duty (G.O.D.) at the Grad House. Volunteers to serve as G.O.D. are needed and interested students are requested to leave their names with any member of the council or at the Grad House.

Next council meeting is Monday, November 27 at 7:30 p.m. at the Grad House. Anyone interested is invited to attend.

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