

Student calls for release of censored APEC documents

BY ALEX BUSTOS

OTTAWA — A University of British Columbia student is asking the federal

courts to quash government attempts to withhold certain documents from the APEC inquiry in Vancouver.

Earlier this month, RCMP and government officials filed five certificates of exemption preventing the release of whole or partial email messages and memos relating to last year's summit of 18 Pacific Rim leaders.

In response, UBC post-graduate student Jonathan Oppenheim — one of the organizers of last year's protest at the Asia Pacific Economic Co-operation summit on the university's grounds — last Friday signed a court application demanding the full release of all the

censored material.

"We're going before the Federal Court and asking for a judicial review," Oppenheim said in an interview.

But federal government officials insist the documents in question must be censored for reasons of national security, foreign relations, third-party interests and cabinet confidence.

"Releasing information of this nature could reasonably be expected to have a chilling effect on the degree to which the representatives of Canada and foreign states may be forthright in their negotiations and relations," wrote John Donaghy, a director in the Department of Foreign Affairs, in an exemption certificate filed Oct. 9.

Full disclosure of the requested files, said Donaghy, would reveal the identity of sources in the Indonesian government,

harming relations between the two countries.

Police authorities also joined their government counterparts in calling for the deletion of certain passages from the APEC-related documents.

In an exemption certificate dated Oct. 13, Vancouver RCMP Supt. C.R. Kary said the contested APEC material contains RCMP secrets detailing the police force's surveillance methods and identities of undercover agents.

"The release of information disclosing security arrangements,

plans, confidential and secret [RCMP] methods or techniques of protection would render them ineffective," wrote Kary.

But Jaggi Singh, a former UBC student who was arrested without charge during the APEC protest, says it's absolutely necessary to disclose the kind of information Kary wants to hide.

Prior and during last year's APEC conference, says Singh, members of the student-led group APEC Alert were spied on by the Canadian Security and Intelligence Service (CSIS).

"I was part of APEC Alert and I know it was never a threat to the life of

any Asian leader," said Singh. "What was CSIS saying about us? What was the nature of their surveillance?" he asked. "Why can't we see these documents?"

In order to find out the answers to these questions, Singh argues, Ottawa

must release all APEC-related material in its possession.

The Federal Court is expected to rule on Oppenheim's motion in about a month-and-a-half.

MAI dies on Paris negotiating table

BY JEREMY NELSON

VICTORIA (CUP) — After nearly four years of high-level discussions, the Multilateral Agreement on Investment has been declared dead by the 29 industrial nations involved in the negotiations.

The pact — which would have established international rules on investment — has been on life support since May, 1998 when lingering disputes between the countries and mounting public opposition forced a suspension of the Paris-based talks.

Negotiators finally pulled the plug on Tuesday when France refused to return to the table, citing concerns about the lack of labour, cultural and environmental protection in the Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI).

"Negotiators have no idea what is going to happen [next]," said Council of Canadians chair Maude Barlow, who travelled to Paris to help lead international protests against the MAI.

"Everything is up in the air."

Critics say the pact would have threatened the sovereignty of individual states by placing too much power in the hands of multinational corporations.

After the collapse of the MAI talks, Canada's Minister of Trade Sergio Marchi indicated he wanted to move the MAI to the World Trade Organization (WTO).

"I think the WTO is the master of its own house," said Marchi, alluding to the fact that the WTO has a better track record when it comes to successfully negotiating agreements.

American negotiators took a different view.

"I don't think we would envision moving this negotiation effectively into the WTO," US trade spokesperson Jay Ziegler told *The Globe and Mail*. "These negotiations have been floundering for a long time, and I think it's fair to say no one knows how to bring it to closure."

Leaders of the anti-MAI movement, however, are not celebrating victory.

"What we have to remember is that the MAI is going to be active in other venues like APEC and the International Monetary Fund," said Tony Clarke, co-author of the book *MAI and the Threat to Canadian Sovereignty*.

"The proponents of the MAI — the big transnationals — are probably going to go underground for a while and there'll be a period when we don't hear anything about it and then suddenly it will surface again."

Concern about the MAI originally arose in 1997 when a confidential copy of the draft text was leaked over the Internet.

If it had been signed, the MAI would have given new rights to large businesses, including the right to directly sue any government that passed a law that interfered with that business' ability to make profits.

The MAI also would have prevented governments from passing any new labour, environmental or cultural protection laws for a 20 year period.

Computer program to mark essays

Program could pose a threat to originality, critics warn

BY ERIN FITZPATRICK

VANCOUVER (CUP) — A psychology professor at New Mexico State University has developed a software program that he says can mark the content of an essay and return it to the student with comments in less than a minute.

The idea of being freed from hours of tedious marking has excited many academics, but some worry the new program, dubbed the Intelligent Essay Assessor opens the door for computers to enter into the realm of human thought.

Dr. Peter Koltz developed the idea for a computer marker almost ten years ago when he was working with a colleague on a study of human memory.

"We were developing a model based on how humans interpret and remember text, when we realized we could give a computer the same ability," he said.

According to Dr. Koltz, computers can be taught to recognize key words and ideas in a text, and can then assign a mark to

an essay depending on how many of those key concepts it finds in the paper.

"You feed the computer sample texts on the topic," he said. "The course textbook for example, and some sample essays that the professor has marked ahead of time, some done really well and others done poorly. Then the computer gets an idea of what to look for."

The program, says Koltz, would allow students to post their essays on the net and get them back within 30 seconds.

"This is superior to the method we use now," said Koltz, "where students get the paper back and don't even look at the comment."

Some academics however, doubt the superiority of the new program.

Roger Blackman, associate Dean of Arts at Simon Fraser University (SFU), says that while SFU is not opposed to the idea of the Intelligent Essay Assessor he has some reservations.

"What we should be interested in at a university are new ideas," said Blackman.

"If a computer is marking based only on what's already out there, then I would worry that the computer only helps the students learn to toe the party line."

There is the possibility that if an essay did contain new concepts, the paper would fail because it lacked the standard lines from the textbook.

But Dr. Koltz says he has put a mechanism in place to guard against this.

"When there is an anomalous essay... or there are different words in it than there have been in the other papers, the computer puts up a red flag.

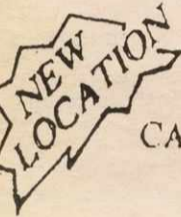
It sends the essay to me and I look at it."

He added that the program is not intended for creative essays, only expository ones.

Dr. Koltz says he is currently using the program in one of his upper level psychology courses at New Mexico State, and that students have been happy with the results.

"We did a survey, and of all 200 students, only one said he wouldn't want to use it."

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