

Shroud of secrecy surrounds firing

by Greg Harris

Three staff members of the Federation of Alberta Students (FAS) set up a picket line outside the FAS office last Tuesday in the Students' Union Building at the University of Alberta.

Two of the picketing staff members were protesting dismissals they received at a meeting that day.

The third was marching in sympathy with them and protesting against being locked out of the FAS office.

Steve Howard, southern Alberta fieldworker, and Percy Toop, researcher, claimed this weekend that their dismissals were unjust.

"It is our opinion that our rights as outlined and protected by the collective agreement (FAS constitution) have been violated and in fact we were wrongfully dismissed by the FAS executive," said Howard.

"And subsequent legal advice has substantiated our position," he said.

Lorraine Mitchell, president of FAS, would not comment on why the two workers were fired.

"The position of the executive on that is that we can't disclose that information." Hiring and firing is traditionally confidential, she said last Wednesday.

She said workers have legitimate channels for expression of unfair treatment.

The two fired workers also withheld comment on the reasons for their dismissals.

"At this time we do not wish to state or comment on the real reasons for our termination as employees of the Federation of Alberta Students."

"We feel that any such discussion at this time could have a decisive impact on the federation, and we would like to avoid this at all costs, even though such discussion would lend support to our position," Toop said.

According to Mitchell, the FAS executive met in closed session on Tuesday and decided to accept a staff evaluation report.

Evaluation reports are issued at the end of an employee's first two months of employment in the federation, she said.

The report recommended to terminate the employment of Toop and Howard but to maintain Matt Shaughnessy, the third picketer, as Northern Alberta fieldworker.

"We accepted this unanimously and then met to inform these individuals of the decision," said Mitchell.

"We attempted to give our reasons, but they left...they weren't being terribly communicative," she said.

Mike Walker, Staff Liaison Officer said, "they haven't told us why they set up the picket...we're not sure if there is anything to be resolved."

"The (the fired workers) have every opportunity to come and talk with us," said Walker.

Mitchell and Walker also denied that a lockout took place



We're not going to take this garbage say FAS picketing employees

Matt Shaughnessy had no comment on the issue.

Toop and Howard have not yet decided on the action they will be taking.

"Presently we are considering what options are open to us, and perhaps by the end of this week we should have a better idea of what action we will be pursuing," said Toop.

Walker and Mitchell emphasized that the federation is

continuing with its anti-cutbacks work.

The 26th of November is going to be a big day on this campus, and the staff controversy is not going to affect that.

"I think FAS' credibility is built on its campaign. Not only are there strong people on our executive, but there are strong people on campuses all across the province and we're going to make that campaign work," said Walker.

Howard and Toop also lent their support for the upcoming FAS campaigns.

"In the meantime we remain committed to the goals of the student movement in this country. We urge students in this province to support and actively take part in both the November 21 Alberta Federation Day of Action against high interest rates, and most importantly, the FAS provincial Anti-Cutbacks Day of Action on November 26," said Howard.

Budget misses EPF but maims equalization

OTTAWA (CUP) - Student leaders are claiming a temporary victory in halting the federal cutback drive for funding to social services after Thursday night's budget. But a chain of federal proposals for transfer funding and announced reductions in areas of funding to provinces have set the stage for an uncertain future.

Some highlights from Finance Minister Allan MacEachen's budget:

- Starting in April, 1982, the federal government wants money paid to the provinces for post-secondary education and health services (called Established Programs Financing) to be "equalized on a per capita basis,"

with each province receiving the same amount of funding per resident. The move means a federal reduction in that area of \$97 million in 1982-83 and total "saving" to the government of \$374 million over five years, according to budget estimates.

- The program of compensating the provinces for tax money they lose under the federal taxation system will be ended next April. Since 1972, this "revenue guarantee compensation" plan has paid about \$5.5 billion to the provinces, and in the coming five years its axeing will amount to \$5.3 billion saved by the federal government.

In total, the EPF adjustments

and ending of tax compensation payments will mean that \$5.7 billion will be chopped from the existing transfer programs, in the coming five years.

But MacEachen's budget outlines federal tax changes that will, he says, allow provincial revenues to climb by \$3.7 billion in the five year period - producing a "net impact" of \$1.9 billion in reduced money available to provinces after the switches.

The budget text says that removal of the revenue compensation plan would not reduce overall funding to the social services, "since these transfers were not designed to finance health and education."

The budget included the announcements that the government wants federal-provincial arrangements for the financing of post-secondary education and "human resources development" to be renegotiated by March 1983, effectively extending the EPF plan an extra year while beginning new talks with provincial finance ministers. If no EPF deal can be struck by the March '83 deadline warns the government proposal, the federal government "could freeze future per capita EPF cash transfers for post secondary education at the 1982-83 level."

In his speech to the House of Commons, MacEachen stressed that transfers to the provinces over the next five years "are still projected to grow at least as fast as the rest of our expenditures." (Note: the analysis means that 'growth' would still happen although it would be significantly less than under current transfer programs.)

"In pursuit of restraint," MacEachen said, "I am asking no more of the provinces than I have imposed on the government of Canada."

Richard Bellaire, researcher for the Canadian Association of

University Teachers (CAUT) said they think the budget was something of a victory, "in that we had seen scenarios of much bigger cuts targeted for post-secondary education this year."

Bellaire said CAUT is now concerned that the provinces are

able to provide the resources for education funding. "Clearly there's a big stick here. The government says that if no satisfactory agreement is reached by March, 1983, the government will essentially freeze funding."

University Night Students air issues

by Wes Oginski

Tonight, students at the U of A will meet with provincial MLA's to wine and dine and lobby the Alberta politicians about higher education issues.

It's University Night, the second annual lobby evening where student representatives and other volunteers invite MLA's across the river to the university campus. Last year about three dozen politicians turned out, along with many other university types, to hear student talk about research problems at the U of A.

This year the focus will change, according to SU VP external Lisa Walter.

"The focus on research (last year) was misplaced," Walter says.

"We wanted to broaden the focus this year by having one night for MLA's (Tuesday) and one night (Monday) for media and community members," says Anti-Cutbacks Team Chairperson Amanda LeRougetel.

However, low response from the community forced organizers

to cancel Monday's planned Night; now the media, community and the MLA's will meet tonight.

That may turn out to be a blessing because University Night organizers expect a low turnout from the Legislature.

Last year 33 MLAs attended, but only 20 are expected tonight, according to LeRougetel.

Le Rougetel says they had problems confirming appointments.

"There hasn't been that much good communication between us and Connie Osterman (provincial Conservative Party Whip), she says.

LeRougetel says that dates were confirmed through Osterman. Last week they were informed that the original date conflicted with another event. This was scheduled after the University Night event. ACT quickly rescheduled the event for this evening.

"It should be quite successful," she says.

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