

Fate of Notre Dame University hangs in doubt

NELSON, B.C. (CUP) — Notre Dame University, the only degree-granting institution in the B.C. interior, will know within two weeks if it will continue operations beyond this academic year.

The recommendations of a one-person government commission on non-metropolitan university education will be made public by then, according to NDU student union president Terry Peterson.

However, the Socred government is not bound to follow the Winegard Commission proposals, which Peterson speculates will closely parallel those made by the student union and other groups to the commission.

Notre Dame students and faculty have fought the university's closure since the former NDP government announced such intentions in the fall of 1975. That government eventually conceded to demands for further development of an interior university, but failed to enact legislation before their defeat by Bennet's Social Credit party.

In January 1976, education minister Pat McGeer discontinued the university's grant and turned funding over to the University Council of B.C. (UCBC), the body which funds B.C.'s three public universities. UCBC subsequently revealed no money was budgeted for NDU.

But in March the council agree to fund NDU for another year, on the condition that it transfers its first and second year courses to Selkirk College in nearby Castlegar, cut back its faculty and transfer its capital assets to the provincial government.

During that time NDU students waged an information campaign in the Nelson community. The result was a community-run "save NDU

fund", and editorial support from the daily newspaper.

Notre Dame students also won the backing of provincial and national student organizations.

When former University of Guelph president William Winegard toured the province as a one-person commission during the summer, he was met by National Union of Students representatives in Victoria, British Columbia a Student Federation representative in Vancouver and a demonstration in Nelson.

The student organization presented briefs urging that NDU become a fourth public university composed of satellite campuses, with the Nelson campus as the administrative centre.

The NUS brief in Victoria argued for the creation of regional campuses whose programs reflected the geographical nature of the region. Such a system made university education, as well as decisions affecting that education, accessible to the people of the interior, it stated.

In its July newsletter BCSF described the commission's reaction as "somewhat hostile".

The federation also voiced suspicion that Winegard has a history of being "anti-student" and "anti-community", pointing to a current lawsuit by the University of Guelph student union against the administration for its seizure of student funds when Winegard was president of that institute.

Peterson, however, speculates Winegard may follow the recommendations that NDU be a degree-granting interior university, but fears the government will not accept his recommendations.

The popular suspicion is that the government wishes to retain the

NDU campus as a satellite of one of the degree-granting coastal universities, he said.

McGeer has already gone on record as saying there will be no degree-granting institute in the B.C. interior.

This year the university offers a full four-year program in Arts and Sciences, although the first and second years are technically

administered by Selkirk College. Peterson terms this a "very artificial difference," as the system simply means NDU faculty are on the Selkirk payroll.

But the student union said the reduction of the university's role to a third and fourth year level institution will result in eventual closure, because enrolment will be too low to ensure adequate funding.

Currently the total enrolment at the NDU campus is about 500.

Rather than see the necessity for a university geographically accessible to interior residents, the government is like to look at the "demographical aspect", by which enrolment declines for post-secondary education in general are expected in the next decade, said Peterson.




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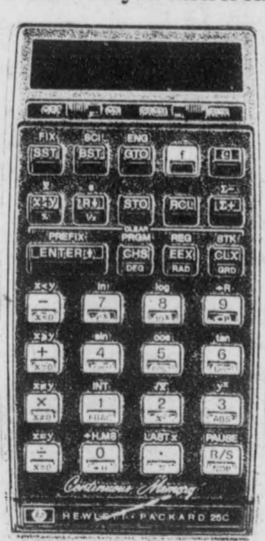
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UNIVERSITY BOOKSTORE

Simon Fraser maintenance on strike

BURNABY (CUP) — Simon Fraser University's 71 mechanical trade workers went on strike Wednesday, September 8, halting all unionized services on the second day of classes.

The university's 660 unionized clerical, cafeteria and janitorial staff honored the picket lines, producing cutbacks in food, library, maintenance and administrative services.

The mechanical trade workers, who have been without a contract since April, are demanding wage parity with similar workers at the University of British Columbia and a modified work week.

In a letter to employees vice-president of administration George Stuart said the university is prepared to support a wage increase of 10.8 percent, an offer the poly-party unions willing to support a reduction in the work day from seven and a half to seven hours nor in the work week from 37 and one half to 35 hours because

the 6.7 percent increase in cost "would put the university in a position of violating what is now the law of the country."

Union business agent Bill Kadey said the work week demand has been changed to a 36 hour week with ever other Friday off. Stuart says this proposal has been made only by letter and would be "impractical from the university's point of view."

Wednesday the student-operated University Centre Building was closed in sympathy with the striking workers, as were four cafeterias.

Buses normally travelling to Simon Fraser stopped at the picket line half way up Burnaby Mountain, forcing hundreds of students to walk a mile along the highway to get to class.

The registrar's office and bookstore were maintained with supervisory staff, causing long line-ups and turning away many students.

Simon Fraser faculty is not unionized so most classes went on as scheduled, although some faculty members observed picket lines and stayed away. The poly-party unions advised students to cross picket lines and most attended regularly scheduled classes.