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BRIEFS

"Strike" des etudiants

MONTREAL (CUP) — Quebec's largest student organization is calling for an unlimited strike at the end of the month to force the provincial government to listen to their demands.

More than 40 CEGEP and university student councils across Quebec decided during a recent meeting of l'Association Nationale des Etudiantes du Quebec to pressure the Liberals to maintain the existing freeze on tuition fees.

Delegates also pledged to lobby for a better loans and bursaries system, and to maintain free CEGEP education.

"Students must state their positions now," said Jean-Pierre Paquet, ANEQ secretary general, "before the government's commission on education makes its recommendations.

"If we adopt a wait-and-see attitude and they go ahead with the cuts, it will be too late," he said.

At least 11 councils have so far obtained student mandates to strike on Oct 22. Organizers say they will call off the strike if a minimum of 20 student associations isn't reached.

"We do not go into this unlimited strike irresponsibly," said Paquet. "For two months we have demanded that the Liberal government negotiate with us on the question of loans and bursaries.

"We have asked them by phone, in person and in press conferences. But as in the past, they are refusing to negotiate," he said.

Partisan Politics at S.F.U.

BURNABY (CUP) — The Social Credit club at Simon Fraser University is considering legal action to stop the student council's anti-Socred election campaign.

"Our attorney will be looking into the possibility of a court injunction to prevent the student society from using student funds to defeat the government," said SFU Young Socred president Mike Sporer.

He said student council has no right to use "forced student dues to support a partisan political cause."

Likening the situation to an Ontario union worker's successful court challenge which prevented dues from being contributed to the New Democratic Party, Sporer said the student council's lobby tactics are in contravention of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

The student council recently adopted the slogan, 'For the future of education, change the government' as part of an education campaign against the Social Credit government.

McMaster fux up

HAMILTON (CUP) — About 300 McMaster University students who were told last month that they had failed a test of English competency, have been now told they actually passed.

The passing mark for the test was 29 per cent on a 80 question test. However, instructions from the testing committee given to the markers said "29" is the passing mark, and did not specify 29 per cent.

Test committee chair Barbara Levy said programmers marked the test with 29 correct answers, or 36 per cent, as passes. The percentage of failing students is actually 27 per cent, and the 43 per cent originally reported.

"It was no fault of the programmers. It was ours for not checking the report more closely," said Levy.

Tools are not enough

VANCOUVER (CUP) — The Nicaraguan population remains resilient despite the contra guerilla war, and is grateful for Canadian aid, says a University of British Columbia student who toured the country early last month.

Adam Jones, an international relations student, said essentials such as food and cooking oil are rationed in Nicaragua. "You get used to seeing shelves that are bare or very poorly stocked."

Nicaraguans are asking foreign donors for consumer items including rubber boots for agriculture and sanitary napkins, which are no longer made there, he said.

Nicaraguans see Canada's Tools for Peace program as a model for material aid around the world, said Jones, who toured Managua and areas around the war zone between Sept 2 and 16 with eight other Tools for Peace members.

He said he didn't meet any current university students but there are many young people in positions of responsibility. "I met heads of departments and health centres who were 23, 24, 25 years old."

"The education system is in such dire straits that people who have just completed a grade will turn around and teach that grade to other students," he said.

"Illiteracy went from 60 per cent to 12 per cent during the two years after the revolution," he said, adding that because the war has prevented follow-up teaching, the official rate has risen to 18 per cent. "But I suspect that it's higher."

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