

SECOND WIND

An occasional column of opinion
by Gateway staff

by Perry Franz

The Student Council of the U of A has before them the decision whether or not to support the Administration's venture to elicit funds from the private sector. This comes after the government's much-publicized and potentially damaging cutbacks in post-secondary educational funding.

Ideally, if the Administration's coffer-filling scheme was successful, the funds would be appropriately

channeled, a surplus would be had and pre-recession times on campus would return.

Whatever Council's decision will be, the situation will be far from uncomplicated. Regardless of Council's vote, it will only have an indirect effect on how or where the funds will be allocated.

The complications arise from the conditions that the private sector might place on their tax-deductible donations.

For example, if a donation is received from Dome Petroleum, will it be possible to direct the

grant and the matching funds from the government into the faculty not oil-based that need the funds? Or will the funds be used only for the benefit of supplying Dome with grads to fill their short- and long-range personnel needs?

There is nothing inherently wrong with this concept with the exception that specific faculties could depend only on the government and its students for the faculty's operating costs since not everyone will be employed by a multinational corporation. With

massive cutbacks and pre-directed private sector funds, it is theoretically possible that some of the more specialized faculties could go the way of the Art Gallery just because those grads can offer no skills directly useful to the business world.

Another problem of soliciting private sector funds is the possibility of the corporations withdrawing their monetary support for various reasons. Already there has been complaints of graduates in certain areas that are not trained adequately for the

corporation's needs and objectives though the corporation has subsidized part of their employee's education.

A possibility of the corporation's insistence on course material is not unrealistic. If those suggestions are taken and acted upon only because of monetary pressure, it is the student who suffers.

In a democratic society, choice is important. A student's choice of course material should reflect their strengths, as an academic. This is not Soviet Russia, where a student is placed where the government believes he or she will be most productive in order to further the goals of the state.

On the other hand, if the companies which control the purse strings are not satisfied with "results", i.e. the graduate, it is only the upcoming students who pay the price. The amount of funds available from both the private sector and the matching funds from the government decrease, and the quality of education must be lowered.

The student is caught in a compromising situation, regardless. If the funds are found but with stipulations, educational choices are narrowed. If there are no funds, unfortunately, but true, education at the post-secondary level becomes a domain of the rich.

Many believe education should be a right, not a privilege. However, in our uncertain economic time, there seems to be few alternatives to private sector funding and the controls that sector might place on the university.

The increases, at best, are only a temporary relief from the monetary woes faced by university finance departments.

The decision to venture out into the business community, theoretically, out of financial necessity, has already been made. The next Student Council meeting on September 28 will see if the students stand behind that decision.

It is a Catch-22 situation, at best with the student caught in the middle. It is our university, at least temporarily, and we must suffer the consequences made by the real world concerning our welfare.

There is a lesson in this situation. Hopefully, in the days where we are in the positions controlling the society we live in and are asked the same questions we are facing today, we will remember the frustration and defeatism we felt, emotions which are the by-product of our times.

Hopefully we will remember to try and help our own as much as possible - no strings attached, in order to uphold high standards of education for future generations who may be facing the problems we cannot solve.

CABARETS

DINWOODIE
2nd Floor SUB.

Footloose

Friday September 17 8 pm.
FOOTLOOSE
 Sponsored by U of A Mechanical Engineering

MODELS

Saturday September 18 8 pm.
THE MODELS
 Sponsored by the U of A Inter-Fraternity Council

CABARETS

Friday September 24 8 pm.
FOOTLOOSE
 Sponsored by U of A School of Nursing

Saturday September 25 8 pm.
PRETTY ROUGH
 Sponsored by U of A Dental Hygiene Society

Tickets are available from the SUB Box-Office (2nd Floor, SUB) and various club members.
 Note: These events are open only to U of A students, staff, and guests. Absolutely no minors admitted.