

PLATO may be in budget squeeze

by Greg Halinda

The PLATO computer system may be the next victim of budget constraints. Revenues used to maintain the system are drying up, and the university will announce shortly whether PLATO will stay or go.

The PLATO system has been on campus since 1980. It was to be funded wholly through external revenues, funds paid by off-campus users for using PLATO.

These revenues have not been sufficient to keep PLATO going.

Last week, deans of faculties using PLATO met with VP Academic Peter Meekison, who asked them for suggestions on how much funding they can put into PLATO to keep it operating.

"The external revenues have declined considerably," said Meekison, adding, "the faculties weren't putting in any actual operating costs."

The heaviest on-campus use of PLATO is in first-year chemistry courses. Nursing, medicine, and dentistry are also big users of PLATO.

Three-quarters of PLATO users are off-campus, where the system is used in public schools and various training programs.

Acting Dean of Science R. Bercov thinks PLATO may be a victim of the times.

"We have to move to methods of

delivery of computer-assisted instruction that are more current," he said.

Bercov thinks losing PLATO would be detrimental, but not critical to his faculty.

Dr. Ruth Collins-Nakai, Department of Pediatrics, is not as amenable to losing PLATO. Her department uses the system to teach undergraduates in pediatrics.

"I think that the university as a whole is not supporting PLATO...

is deplorable. I'm very distressed that the future of PLATO is up in the air," she said.

The destiny of PLATO will be decided by the end of the month. It will hinge on the ability of faculties concerned to find dollars to pour into the system.

Such dollars may be hard to find as funding cutbacks take their toll on departmental budgets. Peter Meekison thinks PLATO's future is doubtful.

Council votes for raising tuition fees

by John Watson

Zero per cent tuition fee increases are no longer the goal of the students' council after they voted Tuesday night to seek "a small tuition increase" for 1987/88.

Council repealed its policy that read: "students' council is in favour of a freeze on tuition fees..." and at the same time agreed to hold a referendum on the issue in conjunction with this year's SU elections.

Dave Oginski, SU President, introduced the motion so he would have room to manoeuvre in upcoming Board of Governor discussions.

ACT chairman Martin Levenson argued the zero per cent tuition increase (a policy the SU has had since 1983) is a principle the SU should maintain.

"It's a principle," he said, "anytime any organization abandons its principles, it loses its credibility."

Ken Bosman spoke against the motion as well, arguing council had no mandate to deal with tuition, and was not adequately representative.

"7,000 students (the number that could be expected to vote in a ref-

erendum) is a hell of a lot more representative and a hell of a lot more credible than the 29 people sitting here," Bosman said.

Council voted unanimously to "support the principle of universal accessibility to post-secondary education by students who meet academic admission requirements..."

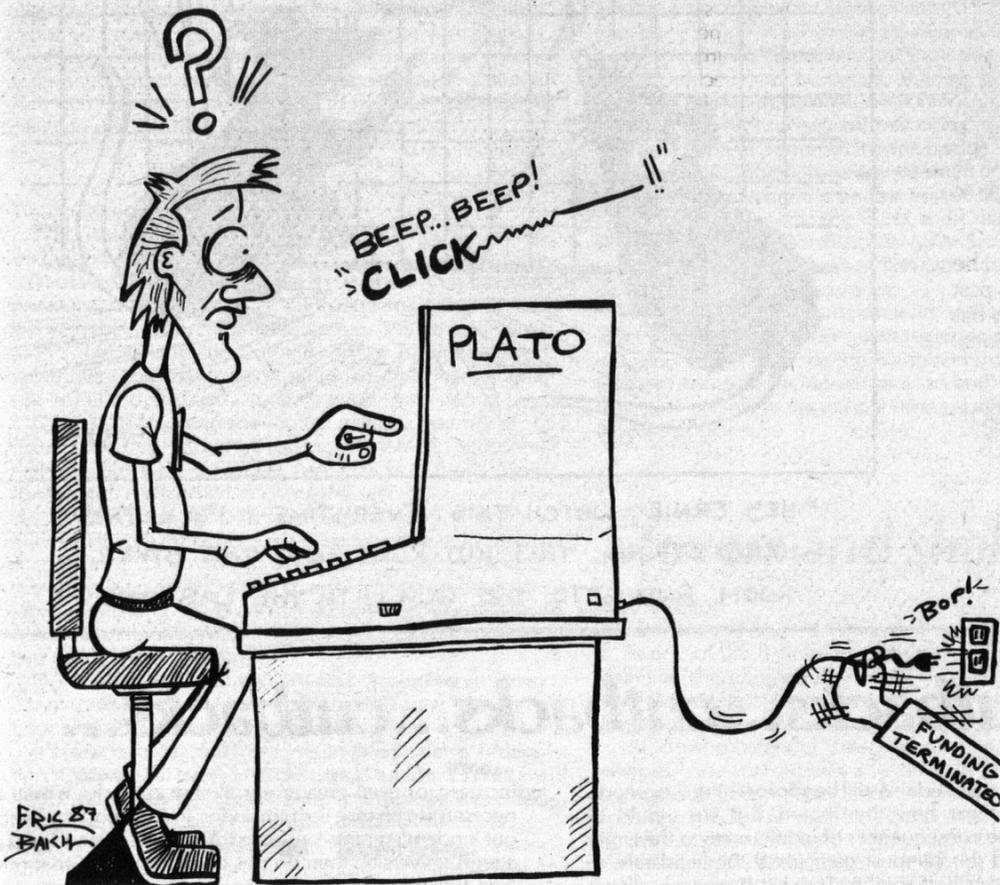
The final part of Oginski's motion, which concedes students should pay a "small" increase, was the most divisive.

Mike Hunter, vice president external, said "It does not make good negotiating sense to ask for no increase. Dave (Oginski) needs room to manoeuvre."

Levenson argued the SU has no position from which to bargain, it only has limited input. "I don't really think SU is in a position to negotiate," he said.

Rob Splane, arts rep, said the SU had to decide now, or face being left out of the University's decision-making process.

"If you don't deal with it now, you can forget it because it is already past us," he said.



Gov't bucks go to athletes

by Jeff Cowley

The Alberta government will be giving away more than a million dollars to athletes this year. It's part of the Jimmie Condon Athletic Scholarship Fund designed to support students involved in collegiate athletic programs.

"These scholarships recognize the sustained commitment that is required at this level of athletic competition," said Dave Russell, Minister of Advanced Education,

"and encourages Alberta's athletes to continue with their academic pursuits."

The scholarships are valued at 1,000 dollars each and are awarded only on the recommendation of the coaching staff and the institution.

Athletes qualify for the scholarship by being a member of a designated team sport, involved in an individual sport, participating as a disabled athlete on a provincial

team, or a member of an athletic development program such as involved in the Can-AM, Commonwealth, or Olympic games.

Athletes must be Alberta residents enrolled in a university, college or technical institute.

The fund was named after Calgary philanthropist Jimmie Condon, and since its inception in 1981, has awarded over 4.5 million dollars to amateur athletics.



Tim Boston (left) and Dave Oginski

photo Rob Schmidt

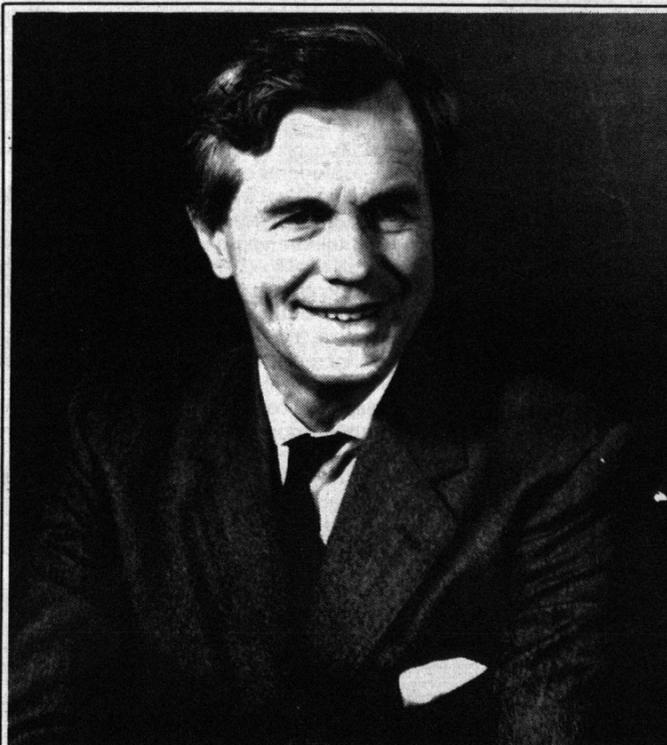
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