

GSA might strike

GRAD STUDENTS REACT

If it has done nothing else, the present crisis over University finances has led many graduate students to question in a fairly serious way the place which they occupy in the University's structure.

Last Thursday night, at a crowded meeting held in Physics V-124, they made clear their intention not to accept quietly the proposed \$482,000 slash in the Graduate Studies budget, of which graduate students would have borne the brunt.

The spirit of the meeting became evident right at the beginning, when a motion to rescind an earlier Graduate Student Association resolution was carried immediately. The resolution referred to had expressed the GSA's willingness to accept a \$100 reduction in tuition fee allowances for Graduate Teaching Assistants as well as a reduction in graduate student travel grants.

The comments attending the motion at the Thursday night meeting indicated that most students were quite unhappy with what they perceived as a discrepancy between the proposed cuts to graduate students and those proposed for other areas of the University's operation. It was brought up, as an example, that the Academic Staff Association, far from accepting any cuts, was actually asking for an increase in their salaries.

The bulk of the meeting was centered around three resolutions as well as one proposal.

The first motion referred to an Administrative Review Committee that was set up at the last meeting of General Faculties Council meeting to inquire into the Budget and the operation of the Administration. It reads, "That this meeting instruct the Graduate Student Association executive to inform President Wyman that the GSA wishes the General Faculties Council Committee to investigate the Budget to be struck immediately and to submit its report as soon as possible."

Evidently, it was the understanding of the Administration that this Committee was to report next year, whereas most of the GSA representatives, as well as many others who voted for it, had understood

that the investigation was to be carried out immediately.

The second motion that was considered read, "That the Graduate Students Association inform the President of the University and the Dean of Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research that it members will not accept any *per capita* reduction in support to graduate students." Attached to the motion was the understanding that "support to graduate students" included such items as "fee remissions, intersession bursaries, and other benefits to graduate students."

There was some debate as to whether or not the GSA should advocate restrictions on admission of future graduate students. One student for instance, pointed out that "we shouldn't be talking about restricting students", and explained that anybody who wanted to come and study was welcome, they just wouldn't all be getting financial support.

One student encapsulated the reaction of many others to such a suggestion when he said, "People who say that really make me wonder if they're living in the same economic reality as I am. To restrict people by saying that they would have to pay their own way to come is to effectively restrict most of them from coming."

He went on, "It seems that if we're talking about which group of graduate students we're going to keep out, that we're talking in totally the wrong realm. What has happened is that we the graduate students have decided that we are a viable part of the operation of this university, and that we aren't going to sit back passively and accept unilateral cuts of our salaries of anything else that is being handed to us by the administration, whom we are not so sure are a viable part of this University themselves."

The Third Motion read, "That the Graduate Student Association begin immediately to form a collective bargaining unit with the purpose of establishing a contract between the University and its Graduate Students. The terms of such a contract would be to fully establish the relationship between Graduate Students and the University of

Alberta."

One student's comment seemed to sum up the feelings of a lot of those present, "I think it's a shame", he said, "that we have to come to the point where we have to unionize or talk about bargaining units or whatever. But, I think it's a simple question of power. That cut is coming, and it's coming from somewhere. It's not coming from the academic staff, and it's not coming from the non-academic staff, because they have power, and we don't; it's as simple as that."

Another student pointed out, "The fact of the matter is, that every other group on campus has a contract --- there's no reason why we shouldn't have a contract as well."

And, finally, a student added this thought, "It's my feeling that if we decide to unionize, that we should join some really ugly outfit, like the Teamsters, and get some real muscle..."

All motions noted above passed with solid majorities. It might be noted, however, that there were a few students present who thought that Graduate Students shouldn't be talking about unionizing. One wanted to know why each graduate student couldn't bargain for himself; another was sure that graduate students shouldn't "stoop to the level of labor unions."

"I would hope that anybody that is doing satisfactory work while on a GTA would not then be told next year he won't have one. If there is a cut in GTA's next year, I think it will be because of a certain number which might have been awarded to new people, but not to cut people who are here."

M. Wyman

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Editorial

We feel several points need to be made very clear about the University of Alberta's financial difficulties. We believe these points are substantiated by the stories and figures in this issue.

1. This University is not in trouble because this year's provincial government has been stingy with funds. While revenues (student fees and government grant) have been increasing, the University deficit increases and has done so for at least the past three years.

2. The shocked reaction on the part of University administrators to the announcement of the provincial grant, and the panic cries of "disaster budget" are, in our opinion, an attempt to cover the fact that the University has been in financial trouble for at least three years because it seems its top administrative officials have not taken due note of the deficit trends and have not taken appropriate action before they found themselves faced with an absolute crisis situation...

3. This crisis situation, we submit, is largely if not totally of their own making. Poor financial policies, lack of realistic planning, lack of direction and, ironically, large increases in expenditures in the very administrative areas which are supposed to be responsible for fulfilling these functions, appear to us to be the chief reasons for the University's financial predicament.

We are sending a copy of our research and conclusions to Mr. H. Thomson, Chairman of the Universities Commission, and to J. Foster, Minister of Advanced Education for the Province of Alberta. We call for a Provincial Commission to investigate the administration of this University.

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