



Greg Neiman photo

Prudhomme, new advocate for Michener Park residents.

Rent increases debated

Tenants disapprove

by John Kenney

"No one told us the facts until the meeting Monday - and then we found we were getting screwed," explained David Prud'homme, the new chairman of the Michener Park Residents' Association.

Rents at Michener Park are due to increase 13.5% on the average, with some rents in the complex to increase by as much as 18%. Prud'homme would like to see an across the board increase of 13.5%, reducing the disparity in rents from \$21 to \$12.

About a week ago newspaper stories reported the Michener Park Residents' Association had endorsed the increases. Not really. Residents first learned of rent increases of 8.5% - 18.5% in newspaper reports. "We were very perplexed - literally," said the new chairman.

The residents expressed their disapproval of such developments at a meeting Monday night. They elected a new chairman (Prud'homme) and executive. "The other executive," claimed Prud'homme, was always busy "discussing such things as car parking and where to park trailers."

The Residents' Association held a meeting December 1 and approved an across the board increase (averaging 13.5%). David Young, director of Housing and Food Services met with the executive of the association December 2 to agree on a final proposal.

This revised rent structure was taken to GFC and approved and taken to the Board of Governors' finance committee and approved. A representative from Michener Park Residents' Association was in attendance but remained silent.

Prud'homme believes the silence was taken as approval. "The main fault in the whole thing lies with our representative as far as I'm concerned," asserted Prud'homme.

The minutes of the association's December 1 meeting were not received by Michener Park residents until January 17. The minutes read: "Moved that the existing distribution of rent structure be maintained with uniform increases across the board."

The new executive of

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HUB residents win appeal against SU

by Kim St. Clair

Two ex-HUB tenants won a court appeal against the Students' Union Tuesday, claiming charges of unfair damage deposit administration.

The tenants, Greg Noval and David Chapman, claimed they were assessed charges for damages reported by them when they moved in, that they were unfairly billed for cleaning expenses after vacating their apartment, and that HUB was making tenants absorb normal operating costs.

After reviewing the case, Judge Spevakow found HUB management had levied what he ruled excessive cleaning charges against the tenants. Consequently, he decided in favour of a \$62 refund to the students.

The initial refund given the students upon their vacation in April of last year totalled \$42.92, with \$124.08 billed against them.

In presenting his case, Mr. Noval pointed out that in two previous years he had only been charged \$9 for cleaning expenses. Mr. Noval claimed the apartment was left in a clean condition, and brought forth a witness who testified that the better part of a day was spent cleaning it.

Regardless, management charged the tenants for eight and one quarter hours cleaning time. "It seems," said Judge Spevakow, "that the hours shown on the inspection report are high. Eight and one quarter hours for cleaning, including three hours to clean a kitchen which is given a total area of five by nine feet, strikes me as being a little bit much."

Defense for the Students' Union argued that cleaning charges seemed high because the SU has to hire out work to professional janitorial companies at commercial rates: six dollars an hour. He also pointed out that, although HUB has staff which does the same work for what amounts to \$3.55 per hour, there are not enough of them to go around when the bulk of tenants vacate at the end of April.

On this point Judge Spevakow ruled it was unfair that one student should end up paying almost double what others do just because he happens to move out at the

same time as a number of others.

In summing up he delivered a slight reprimand to the Students' Union, stating that "the Students' Union has an obligation to average the cost out so that each tenant is subject to the same price."

It was found that evidence presented by HUB defense had inconsistent and unclear marking in the work estimate report sheet, that there were clerical errors in the computations, and that the documents presented were not inclusive or extensive enough.

Mr. Noval charged that

normal operating costs were imposed upon tenants; SU defense pointed out that tenants are never charged over what original maintenance estimates indicate.

Although no official statement has been released on the matter, SU general manager Harry Goldberg explained that the Students' Union's goal is "to be as fair as possible and yet cover our costs."

Mr. Goldberg had not been aware of similar complaints arising from HUB tenants. Only one such case has been brought up in the three months he has been in office.

University money lobby

It may be possible for Alberta's universities to circumvent, if only in a small way, the 11% ceiling on government education spending increases.

With the demise of the 3 Alberta University (3AU) fund next March 31, a system whereby the provincial government matched private money grants to universities will pass away as having been only nominally successful.

About sixteen million dollars were accumulated in the fund over a five year period, which were divided up between the U of A, the University of Calgary, and the University of Lethbridge, and used almost totally for capital expenditures like building maintenance.

"Most of the buildings that have been allotted for in the past five years here have some

3AU money in them," said L.C. Leitch, university vp (finances and administration).

But a provision for matching grants to universities has been made in the proposed Adult Education Act, and Leitch says the U of A is lobbying that it might be allowed to be spent on general funds (staff, supplies, research, etc.) as well as new assets.

If this happens, it means that money private donors give the university might be matched dollar for dollar by the provincial government in addition to the regular grant at present under the ceiling.

Leitch would make no predictions as to the outcome of the lobby, or even that the provision in the draft of the new act would be contained in the final outcome.



Engineers in Dinwoodie Wednesday - they may be lacking in other areas, but spirit they've got. Ray Popikaitis photo

Future of HUB undecided as elections approach

by Kim St. Clair

The fate of HUB remains unresolved. Negotiations regarding its sale to the university have still not been finalized, even though they have been going on for the past four months.

It was hoped that the HUB deal could have been completed before the upcoming student elections, but executive member Gene Borys expresses confidence that the sale will be made at some point in the future.

"We seem to be coming closer and closer to an understanding which we hope will be acceptable to both sides ... I think it will be the wisest move the Students' Union has ever made"

The university, Borys claims, is better equipped to manage HUB than is the SU, having much more capital and labour to draw upon. Up to 85% of HUB tenant damage deposits are retained, he said, because the Students' Union must contract work out to expensive

commercial agencies. The university, on the other hand, has a large enough staff to handle maintenance within their own ranks, at a much cheaper cost.

Borys cited HUB as a major drain on SU finances - finances which he feels could be put to better use elsewhere.

HUB is not a prospective campaign issue says Borys, because anyone opposing the sale would just be "shooting the breeze." Furthermore, he contends that such persons "would just be opening themselves up

to criticism from people who do not understand the situation."

"The people who want to hang onto it have never really come up with a reason for it. We'll probably have slates running who, for no reason other than just wanting to run an apartment building, will say 'keep HUB' even though it will mean reduced services and financial instability for the next four or five years."

At present inquiries into possible HUB structural modifications are being con-

ducted, after which it is hoped negotiations will be concluded. SU general manager Harry Goldberg feels that negotiations may end by early February. At this time the finalized proposal will be taken to Students' Council by the executive for approval, and to the Board of Governors by the university administration officials.

Should the university accept the arrangement, Mr. Goldberg projects a takeover date of April 1st.