

Friends come
and go...

the Gateway

THURSDAY, APRIL 2, 1981

...but enemies
accumulate.

Board to ask for tuition hike?

by Peter Michalyszyn

Defying repeated government promises that tuition fees will not rise next year, the Board of Governors' finance committee at the U of A has proposed a 15 per cent tuition fee increase.

This would bring tuition fees to about \$695 for most students. With Students' Union and other fees, the total fees paid would be about \$780.

The finance committee's action is a strategic move to ensure sufficient funding for the U of A, said former Students' Union president Nolan Astley at Tuesday's Council meeting. Astley breached the confidentiality of Tuesday morning's B of G finance committee meeting to warn councillors of the proposed increase. Had he not done so, the proposal would probably not have become public knowledge until two days before the April 10 Board meeting.

"The university's primary rationale (for the proposed increase) is that the university will be in a very bad way if it doesn't get at least a 15 per cent increase," in its operating grant, according to Astley.

The operating grant, which makes up about 89 per cent of the university's total budget of over \$170 million, has not been announced yet by the government, even though the U of A budget deadline was April 1.

However, in anticipation of a smaller grant, the university has budgeted for less than a 15 per cent increase.

It has had to go to arbitration over salaries with its academic and non-academic staff, and now has threatened a tuition fee increase to make up for expected funding shortfalls.

Alberta Minister of Advanced Education and Manpower Jim Horsman has repeatedly said, however, that he foresees no tuition increases next year.

But Horsman has also said repeatedly that only if he is presented with some very compelling arguments for tuition increases would he reconsider his position.

According to student representatives, the compelling

arguments should be made not for tuition fee hikes, but rather for adequate government funding.

The two staff associations argued during negotiations that they should not have to pay for the University's inability to get sufficient funds from the Alberta

government, through declining after-inflation salaries.

Now the students are complaining about much the same thing: they feel the university is using them as "hostages" to blackmail the government, according to new SU vp external Lisa Walter.

"I'm extremely disappointed at the university for using students as a tool in its attempt to get adequate funding from the

continued on page 6



photo Ray Giguere

Cold, hard cash

That's what the Board of Governors wants to shake you down for more of.

Students organize to fight increase

A motion to increase tuition fees 15 per cent will go to the monthly Board of Governors meeting Friday, April 10, after classes are out, after the *Gateway* stops publishing, and shortly after the rookie Students' Union executive takes office.

"This has to be the worst possible time for this (the proposed increase) to happen," said outgoing SU vp external Kris Farkas at Tuesday's Council

meeting.

Add to this the question of the Board's general unwillingness to have student input (only two Students' Council reps are allowed at the Board meetings) and the recent resignation of the student representative on the Board of Governors, Ken Lawson-Williams, and there doesn't seem to be much hope for an effective student outcry against the tuition hike.

But there could be some surprises: The Federation of Alberta Students and the SU have started a campaign to distribute pamphlets, recruit interested students, and lobby Board of Governors members to vote down the tuition proposal.

The new Soper executive will appoint an interim Board student representative - probably Mary Ann Gillies - and next Wednesday, they'll meet with Minister of

Advanced Education and Manpower Jim Horsman.

The culmination of the campaign is the April 10 Board meeting, where organizers hope as many students as possible will show in numbers to voice their opposition to university policy.

Anyone who is interested in not paying more tuition fees for a poorer education next year should contact Lisa Walter, SU vp external, in room 259 SUB.

Students caught in the crossfire

Students of the U of A are being held hostage by our own university administration and Board of Governors.

The decision of the Board finance committee to ask the provincial government for a 15 percent tuition fee increase despite repeated government statements that no increase will be permitted is nothing short of political blackmail. Students are being used as pawns, pitted against both government and administrators. This is intolerable.

What is even more ridiculous is that the Board of Governors will be asked to approve this tuition fee increase at their April 10 meeting, five days before the government announces in the legislature this year's operating grant for the university.

The university is already assuming they will not receive the 15 percent grant increase they requested. With little warning and without even waiting for the government's decision, they are planning to ram through a large fee increase. This is outrageous. Tuition fee increases should be the last

Editorial

measure taken to combat cutbacks.

Advanced Education minister Jim Horsman has said privately the universities will be "pleasantly surprised" at their grants this year. In addition, he has said the university would have to present a very convincing case to the government before he would approve any tuition fee increase. And without even knowing how much money they will get next year, the U of A request for a tuition fee increase is hardly convincing.

Pressuring the government to provide adequate funding is a perfectly reasonable pursuit for the Board of Governors. But trying to use a threatened fee increase as a club to bludgeon the government into submission shows appalling lack of concern for students.

It also calls into question the

entire purpose of the university: precisely what are all these people doing here, if one of their primary goals is not to serve the students who form 100 percent of the clientele?

Instead, the Board has decided to go after the weakest lobby group, threatening to squeeze them for another \$100 if the government doesn't cough up the bucks. If the university tried this on the academic or non-academic staff, the uproar would be deafening, because these groups have some powerful support within the administration. To pick on the weakest group is contemptible.

This action would also establish a frightening precedent: it is acceptable for the university to screw students to fight the government. After all, there is still the chance Horsman and the Tories will resist the university's blackmail and approve a tuition fee increase. This "gambling with students" should not be the university administration's prerogative.

There are all sorts of students who are willing to work with the ad-

ministration and the Board to fight government cutbacks and funding shortfalls. If the Board were truly concerned about the university community, it would willingly co-operate with students to provide a better educational institution. Instead, the Board has chosen to obey the bureaucratic imperative: self-preservation at all costs, and everybody for themselves.

This selfish attitude, placing students in the middle where they are being used or attacked by both the Board and the government, is despicable. It goes against everything the university should stand for.

And students should not sit back and quietly be held for ransom. We should make ourselves heard, and let the Board know we will not tolerate being manipulated and used by the very institution designed to serve us. The meeting of the Board is on Friday, April 10, at 10:00 a.m., in Room 3-15 University Hall (across from SUB).

Be there.

Keith Krause