

Protest ends with police arrests

OTTAWA (CUP) Twenty-eight students are about to stand trial for their role in one of the most dramatic occupations in Canadian university history.

The students were arrested by 75 Université de Moncton security guards and city police in full riot gear April 11, and charged with obstruction for their role in the takeover of the U de M administration building.

The 4 a.m. raid came as the students were preparing to celebrate Easter Sunday mass following a week-long occupation to protest a rumoured 20 to 25 per cent increase in tuition fees.

The students at Université de Moncton, the only unilingual French university outside Quebec, are among the poorest in the country. Seventy-five per cent draw student aid, compared to about one-third nationally.

Tuition fees have risen 85 per cent in the last five years, 23 per cent in the last year alone. The Board of Governors was to meet in camera April 3 to discuss another increase, and it refused to allow a presentation opposing tuition fee increases from the student government, La Fédération des Étudiants de l'Université de Moncton (FEUM).

Sixty students showed for the Board meeting, but it was moved at the last minute to a secret location. Although the Board agreed to meet with the rallying students after their meeting, only the Board president and University president came.

250 students decided at a general meeting the next day to occupy the administration building. For the first two days they also barricaded entrances to campus, shutting down the university.

Under pressure from the police, they relented and lowered the barricades, but most of the 1,500 students who did not join the occupation stayed away from classes, so none were held.

During the week, 250 to 300 students slept in the administration building at night, and 600 to 1,000 participated in meetings

and workshops during the day.

Fewer students remained in the building overnight for fear of the arrests which came in the middle of the night, according to Diane Flaherty, executive officer of the Canadian Federation of Students (CFS). CFS supported the occupation and later narrowly elected one of its leaders, Brenda Cote of FEUM, as its chair.

The protest ended suddenly with the 28 arrests. Flaherty says she is puzzled by the choice of those arrested because "many of the most prominent leaders weren't arrested."

After using force to end the occupation, the university administration issued orders forbidding assembly of more than five persons at the U de M for any purpose other than teaching classes for the remaining two weeks of the term.

The 28 arrested students were to appear in court on charges of obstruction, but all the cases were postponed to late September or early October. Flaherty said the police may make a deal to drop charges for 15 of the students if the other 13 plead guilty.

Soon after the court appearances, the university began mailing out letters expelling some of the students involved in the occupation. The administration refused to provide a list of these students so it took many weeks for occupation organizers to learn that 17 had been expelled.

Fifteen of the 17 appeared before a university committee to seek readmittance. Of these:

Two were readmitted with no conditions attached.

Two were offered readmittance subject to two additional conditions, that they agree not to hold any positions with any organization on campus and not to attend any student meetings or other activities.

Seven were flatly denied readmittance.

Three of the six offered conditional readmittance refused.

The occupying students claimed a partial victory when tuition fees were raised 12.9 per

cent, instead of the rumoured 20 to 25 per cent.

Flaherty said although there were some special circumstances at U de Moncton, incidents like the occupation will become more common.

"I guess there comes a point

when the frustration sets in and students decide something has to be done," she said. "Chances are we'll see more of this, not necessarily occupations, but similar tactics."

She said planning for some of these 'similar tactics' will come

out of the CFS Week of Information in October. She expected that this spring will be marked by the use of political lobbying, leafleting to the general public, sit-ins and demonstrations across Canadian campuses.

Anti-porn squad opens fire

VANCOUVER (CUP) It's one down and two to go for women fighting pornography at Simon Fraser University (SFU).

When campus groups began campaigning this summer against the presence of pornography at three campus locations, the Canadian National Institute for the Blind immediately pulled seven different magazines from its campus concession.

But the university bookstore continues to stock porn magazines and the campus library has so far refused to cancel subscriptions.

The campaign was spearheaded by Laurie White, who introduced a motion in July that the student society demand the removal of pornography from university outlets. The SFU women's centre and the Canadian Union of Public Employees have joined the battle.

A spokesperson for the CNIB outlet said: "If the university doesn't want us to sell them, then we won't sell them."

But university bookstore manager Benny Quan and librarian Ted Dobbs argued that removing the magazines would be censorship.

Librarians have traditionally taken a very firm stand against censorship," Dobbs said. "I don't think removing those magazines is going to change attitudes. There's a lot of attitudes towards women that have to change, but I can't shove my moral imperative down other peoples' throats."

White said the fight will continue as students begin the fall session.



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