

Summerfest low Council priority

by Richard Watts

Those of you who enjoyed 'Summerfest' this summer may not be aware that the festival stood and still stands on shaky ground.

There was dissension within Edmonton City Council over whether to fund Summerfest to the tune of \$600,000, representing 40 percent of the total budget of the festival.

The people responsible for putting on the festival did not receive their grant from the city until 6 weeks before the festival was due to open.

Says director of Summerfest, Bill Curtin, "We didn't know whether we were going to get the grant, we didn't even know how much we were going to get."

Curtin continued, "How are we supposed to get performers of world calibre if we can't guarantee them that they'll be paid."

One of the council members who most strongly objected to the city funding of the festival was alderman Olivia Butti.

"I just object to spending taxpayers' money on this type of thing."

Butti however did not object to the city's funding of Klondike Days.

"Klondike Days has proved itself through the operation of its volunteer workers, until Summerfest starts proving that it can support itself through the actions of volunteers then I don't see why we should fund it."

Most of the people who do work for Summerfest are volunteers.

Alderman Butti allowed that she had not heard of such dedication.

In addition, Butti refused to discuss the merits of community benefits of an arts festival such as Summerfest over the fairs and parades offered by Klondike Days.

One member of city council, Alderman Paul Norris, did offer his reasons for opposing city funding of an Arts Festival and did discuss the merits of such a festival versus Klondike Days.

"It was hoped that by putting on cultural events of national scope and quality we could get away from our reputation as a kind of cultural backwater."

"We have some people so dedicated that they raised a second mortgage on their homes in order to put up the money to get the quality entertainers we had," says Curtin.

"The reason I objected to the city funding Summerfest was that I had just completed a tour of Europe where I heard some of the most beautiful music played right on the street; the player would

have a hat beside him and you could put any amount of money into it. Unfortunately here in Edmonton we have this stupid by-law which prevents such activity. I thought it would be better to just change that by-law," said Norris.

On the worthiness of a festival such as Klondike Days over an arts festival such as Summerfest, Norris did explain Klondike Days "appeals to everyone on a very basic level, while Summerfest can only appeal to the select few who like that kind of music".

On hearing of the wide variety of entertainment provided by Summerfest Norris admitted to not really paying attention to what had gone on during the festival.

However Alderman Norris did admit that since his initial opposition to the concept of Summerfest he had changed his mind and now feels that a summer arts festival could be beneficial to the city.

Bill Curtin, Summerfest director, felt that Summerfest benefited the city in other areas besides cultural enrichment.

"Look at all the fringe events taking place along Whyte Avenue that has to have been a benefit to the merchants along there," says Curtin.

In addition, Curtin feels that Art and Culture do require assistance from time to time.

"In these days of television and other instant entertainment media it is so easy to overlook the Arts as a way to enrich our quality of living," says Curtin.

In choosing such an unusual setting the exhibit drew a lot of attention and the Alberta artists who had their work displayed received all kinds of recognition because their work was so good, said Curtin.

Curtin explained that Summerfest was initially designed to be a five year experiment. The city agreed to help fund the festival for five years at the end of which Summerfest would hopefully be self-sufficient. This summer, Summerfest's 2nd year, the city funded 40 percent of Summerfest.

Curtin elaborated, "It was hoped that by putting on Cultural events of international scope and quality we could get away from our reputation as a kind of cultural backwater and this would go a long way towards attracting head offices and conventions and help Edmonton grow into a fine place to live and work."

U students plan strike

by Richard Watts

Residents living in the University of Calgary's residences for married couples are planning a rent strike.

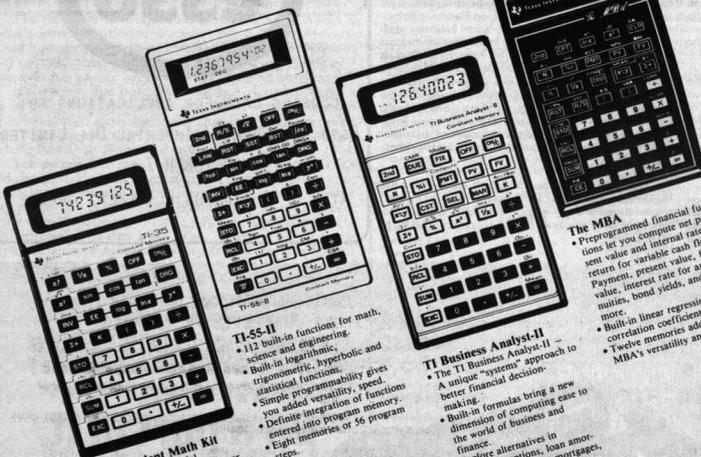
The strike is planned for the beginning of November and is a reaction to the U of C's proposal that would pool all the residences under a central authority.

This new policy of pooling the residences will incorporate three new buildings and will mean higher rents for all students living in residence; all those in family housing face the biggest increase.

Students living in Varsity Courts (the family residences) are planning to collect their rent independently and withhold it from the university for about two weeks.

The money will be kept in a bank for that period. The interest earned on the money will go towards paying legal expenses the students expect to incur in fighting the new pooling policy of the University.

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