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BC minister gets best of both worlds

VICTORIA (CUP) - The same day that B.C. universities minister Pat McGeer told the legislature that he opposes tenure, he was granted an extension of this position at the University of B.C.

Opposition members burst into laughter September 17 when McGeer justified his request for an extension of tenure by saying the policy was established by the university and not himself.

He said the extension means funding of the neurological research project that he heads will continue.

McGeer denied charges that his position as universities minister influenced the UBC board of gov-

ernors when they decided to grant him a leave of absence beyond normal university policy.

"It has nothing to do with me personally," he said. "It has to do with the programs I manage. Obviously, my resigning from the university essentially destroys a functioning research team."

But student representative Dave Dale said: "It's a difficult decision to bite the hand that feeds you."

McGeer has come under fire since he assumed his role as universities minister in 1975 because he refuses to resign as a UBC professor. His research team, which receives about \$150,000 a year from

the national research council, explores the causes of senile dementia, Huntington's disease and Parkinson's disease.

The project employs five full-time researchers, plus McGeer's wife Edith, who is acting head of the project.

Faculty board representative Hugh Greenwood said McGeer's research work does not infringe on his job as a cabinet minister.

"Sure, if he was taking his lab time out of his government time there would be a problem," Greenwood said. "But he works in the lab evenings and weekends. That's how he gets his relaxation."

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Fleming

into joining. "But once it's out there," said Fleming, "no one will force you to criticize your editor." "We're hoping the publishers won't snub their noses to regional interaction," he added.

Fleming pointed to countries such as Britain, Sweden, Denmark, Australia and Germany who have implemented press councils of some sort. "Freedom of the press does not mean freedom from government," he said, "it means freedom from other intimidation. It's asinine to suggest a democratically elected government doesn't have the right to step in when freedom of media is threatened. Several countries have limited conglomerate media ownership through anti-trust laws, which is something the Canadian government refuses to do."

The proposed legislation dealing with ownership concentration is needed to provide answerability, said Fleming. For free and diverse expression of ideals, he feels that "When you are a monopoly in print in a major city, answerability is vital." The legislation would not be retroactive, said Fleming, but would apply to future acquisition attempts.

Fleming said cross-media ownership will be restricted because "although there are economies in cross ownership, there are also great dangers" in influencing an audience with a monopoly of expressing ideas or concerns. The government position, similar to the Kent commission, is that concentrated cross-media ownership could potentially restrict editorial free

speech, although both parties agree that such abuses have not yet occurred. The new legislation is supposed to prevent future concentration.

Additional news bureaux will be encouraged to work against narrow news regionalism, explained Fleming. "We don't report to each other (region), instead we always seem to be fighting each other," he stated. Fleming said the regional approach to news reporting in Canada creates a lack of understanding from region to region. "It's important Canadians understand news from a Canadian perspective, what it all means to us as Canadians."

Fleming would not comment about specific regulations concerning regional monopolies, such as the Irving cross-media monopoly in New Brunswick, beyond vague referrals to breaking the monopoly "through the courts", and using the C.R.T.C. to regulate cross-media holdings "through public debate".

Fleming was unclear in stating what the Federal Government would do with the Thompson monopoly in national newspaper publication. The Thompson newspaper chain controls the Globe and Mail, as well as other papers from coast to coast.

He said cabinet rejected retroactive divestment, but will regulate Thompson's activities in the future by restricting their freedom to buy additional papers. "Retroactivity has a certain repugnance to it," said Fleming, "but I don't say government doesn't have to do it." He added, "I do know Thompson won't be able to buy another paper unless they divest."

The proposed legislation is expected to be tabled before the House of Commons sometime in November when Parliament's winter session begins.

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