

THE SU DEBT—SPECIAL REPORT

University feels concern

by Wes Oginski

A million dollar debt is bound to turn a few heads. The Students' Union's debt is causing great concern with their bankers, the University of Alberta.

The university took up the growing SU deficit last year and essentially lent money (at prime plus one interest) so the SU could continue to operate.

Some university officials feel the debt could have been avoided.

"I think the problem could have been avoided," says U of A president Myer Horowitz, "but I think the problem has been long in developing."

"Consequently, we have to reflect not only on the decisions made by the Students Union in the last year or two, but of decisions that were made in the last dozen years," he adds.

Yet there is optimism present.

"We think we can eliminate the debt," says D. C. Norwood, executive assistant to the university vice president of finance.

Norwood keeps frequent contact with the financial managers in the Students' Union.

The university feels there is a quick method to eliminate the debt, but it could be painful and difficult to implement.

"The easiest way, quite honestly, is raising fees," says Norwood.

"A five dollar increase in fees means an extra \$120,000 a year. That might put them on top and begin to build their reserve again."

Implementing a large increase is a bit more difficult to do.

"They (the SU) do not need a referendum for a dollar increase per year," Norwood explains. But



University views Students' Union problem with concern, but thinks the debt can be eliminated.

any greater increase does need a majority of a referendum vote.

Horowitz explains this problem a bit more extensively.

"To the extent that the problem is a part of insufficient income, then we all have to remind ourselves that the SU executive over the years have been very limited in the extent they have been able to advocate a change in fees."

"The kind of change they have been able to introduce with minimal agony is much less than the inflationary cost. The implication of modest increases was that

the SU should have been cutting back on expenditures, rather than increasing expenditures."

This appears to be the general consensus. The SU will have to make the businesses more efficient and cut expenditures.

The university, with the Students' Union, is attempting to relieve some of the SU financial pressure.

"We're looking at transferring caretakers," Norwood says.

This would mean the Canadian Union of Public Employees, employed exclusively in the Students' Union Building, would

be incorporated into the Non-Academic Staff Association, which represents the rest of the university personnel.

"We have to make sure the unions agree ... but it is a bit more complicated than that," he adds.

"We are fortunate that we (the university) have to deal with a small number of unions." Some universities have a union for every area of service.

Another problem that may complicate the debt is the constant changing of the executive committee of the SU on a yearly basis.

"It is a major problem,"

agrees Horowitz.

"Consequently there has to be a happy coming together and clarification of the different sets of responsibilities between: (a) the elected executive; and (b) the senior paid officials; and in the gray area where the two interact."

"It is pretty public that there have been difficulties and that hasn't helped," he adds referring to past difficulties the SU has had with senior officials within its own organization.

The SU business manager is one of the most important permanent positions in the SU structure, according to the university.

"The business manager is absolutely essential," says Norwood. "He can give the continuity that the SU needs because of the way the executive is formed from year to year."

Both the university and the SU appear to be happy with the new business manager, George Ivanisko.

Norwood did speculate on what could happen, however, if the SU situation did not improve or worsened.

"We would have to step in

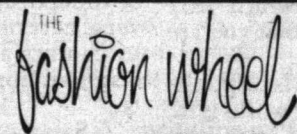
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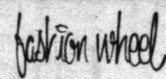


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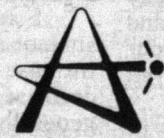
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