

N.B. Student Protesters Continue Occupation

'Students should consider changes in the present structure and support for the students in Fredericton.' —Woozy

FREDERICTON (CUP)---The occupation of a government building by 600 New Brunswick students to force changes in that province's student aid system is into its second week. Included in the 600 are twenty students from P.E.I. who, despite the fact that they will gain no financial benefit from the occupation, are getting involved to give support.

Talks between the Government and the students are continuing with the occupation being characterized by government concessions and student adamancy. The government offered the students Advisory Groups consisting of Youth Minister Ouellet and a student from each of the province's universities. It would make recommendations to cabinet in June.

However, last Thursday, the students overwhelmingly rejected the offer saying that since the committee would have no power to make decisions "the government is just continuing to give us the run-around."

Giles Beaulieu, one of the student negotiators, said students want a firm commitment for changes in the aid program, now, not in June. He said it would be difficult to alter the changes at that late date if students found them unacceptable.

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So, as a counter-proposal the students told Mr. Ouellet they would form the committee immediately and make recommendations to the cabinet within a week. The students would stay until the cabinet acted on their recommendations.

Earlier Ouellet admitted that all the students' demands which include a lowering of the mandatory loan ceiling and an increase in grants fall within provincial jurisdiction.

The government had previously argued that no changes could be implemented until federal aid policies changed first. It now admits jurisdiction, but says there is no money to implement the \$3.5 million reform package demanded by the students. The 600 occupying students,

however, say they intend to stay in the lobby of the government's Centennial Building which houses the NB cabinet and their department, until the government agrees to make improvements in the aid system effective September 1976.

To counter the government plea of poverty, occupation organizers released a statement February 1 condemning the government for "incompetence" and citing a \$10 million giveaway to a NB industry which went bankrupt, and the government's new \$1.5 million leased aircraft among other examples of government mismanagement.

Outside Support

Meanwhile, support in the form of telegrams and pledges of money have been received from student organizations across Canada. The money is required to offset the \$500 plus needed daily to feed the students and support the occupation.

The Universite de Moncton students, who comprise about five of the six hundred occupiers, used up the last of their student council funds over the weekend,

NUS executive secretary Dan O'Connor, who has been in NB since the second day of the occupation, said student organization across the country have been asked to provide whatever help they can.

The Ontario Federation of Students has already sent a three-person delegation to NB as well as a \$1000 contribution. Atlantic schools are expected to contribute at least \$500, and other organizations are soon expected to announce their financial support.

UPEI Unsure

The U.P.E.I. Student Union is presently unsure of the means it will use to support the occupation although, according to President 'Woozy MacDonald', there is no doubt that the support will be offered.

MacDonald at the present time is asking for suggestions of methods we could use to support the New Brunswickers and to fight our own struggle for a just aid policy on the Island.

He also said a group of Quebec student unions are collecting money for the occupation, and that BCSF agreed to approach BC colleges and universities for their support.

Jim Gray, the student union president at the University of Regina, said he would call an emergency council meeting to get funds for the N.B. students, and agreed to co-ordinate fund-raising activities among Prairie school O'Connor said.

Support will continue to mount O'Connor said "as long as the New Brunswick students are fighting for equitable post-secondary education in this province. In the past few years students have seen that unless they work to remove barriers to education such barriers as high tuition, high loans and inadequate facilities will multiply."

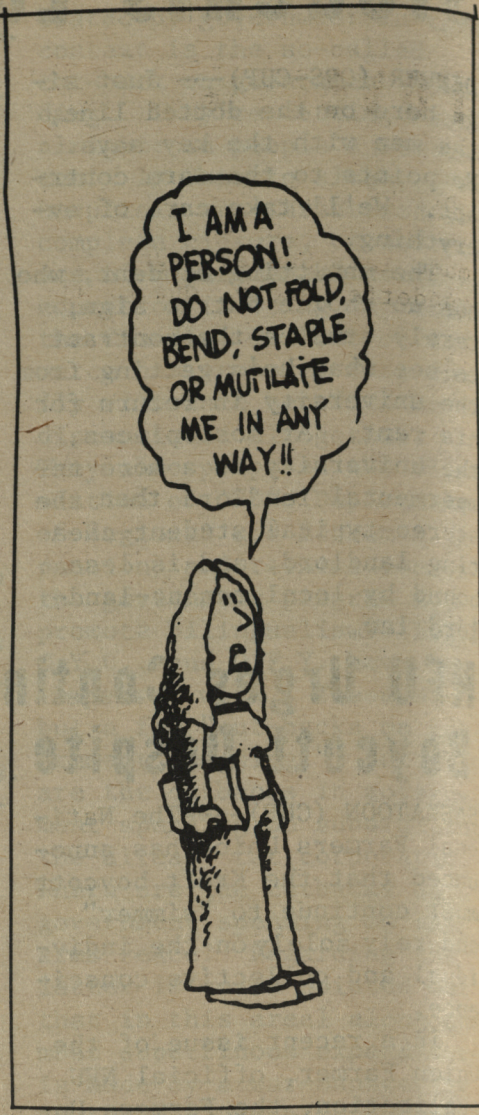
He called on the NB government to "show good faith towards the future generations in the province by moving to improve the present student aid program." He also called on the government to support publicly "a more accessible system across Canada" in the current round of federal-provincial negotiations.

N.B. Support

Although most of the students in the occupation are from the Universite de Moncton, other institutions are beginning to show greater support than when the occupation began on January 28.

St. Thomas University in Fredericton maintains a presence of about 20 students at the occupation on a rotation basis, and sentiment has been growing on the campus for a class boycott to support the student aid demands of the occupiers.

Shippagan College in the North-East part of the province have some people in the occupation, but cannot afford



buses to take the 100 student here to Fredericton. They spent their funds busing to an earlier abortive occupation attempt.

The St. John's campus of the UNB has pledged some financial support, but gave no exact figure, and said they would attempt to send one busload of students to join the occupation.

And the UNB student council at Fredericton voted February 2 to provide \$1000 to the occupation, following a speech by former UNB student president Warren MacKenzie chastising the council for failing to show leadership during the occupation.

There are now some UNB students at the occupation, and others are calling for a mass meeting to decide on whether to mount a boycott to support the occupation.

