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Student Take-Over

VANCOUVER (CUP) - About 35 Simon Fraser students left the university administration building Jan. 25 after occupying it for two nights to protest a six per cent tuition fee hike.

The students decided to leave after BC higher education minister Bruce Strachan agreed to meet with student leaders. Strachan later agreed to "fund a study" into higher education in the province.

The occupation highlighted a week of student protest in B.C. There were also rallies in Victoria and Vancouver, organized by the Pacific region of Canada's student federation.

About 150 students showed up to a Jan. 23 Simon Fraser board of governors meeting to demand a tuition fee freeze and a royal commission on accessibility to post-secondary education.

But when the board approved the fee increase, many of the students decided to stay.

The students disrupted the meeting with chants of "Freeze our Fees," and moved to the centre of the board room. The meeting broke up, and the board members left.

At least 70 students decided to continue the sit-in. About 2,000 students came out to support them on the 24th, marching past the administration building, closed to all but security, the media and building staff.

Numbers dwindled, but the students stayed until Jan. 25.

About 1,500 students marched in Victoria Jan. 23 to call for a tuition freeze as

part of the Canadian Federation of Students- Pacific region week of action on tuition fees.

University of Victoria student council executive Elizabeth Loughran said the commission was "common sense."

"Really, what we are saying is 'We dare you to strike a royal commission to see what's happening with our education system'," she added.

University of British Columbia students protested their administration's decision to raise tuition fees five per cent by carpeting the corridor outside the university's board room with a banner.

On the banner were were messages of student concerns. Students blocked all the exits except the one with the banner, forcing the governors to walk on it as they left the meeting.

"It shows that the university is willing to walk all over students' needs to get to what they want," said student council executive Vanessa Geary.

Tuition costs have increased 128 per cent at B.C. universities and over 300 per cent at colleges in the last decade. That makes post-secondary education the only provincial social program which has not been adjusted to match inflation since 1984.

Strachan said the province didn't "need a royal commission" to address B.C. student concerns.

"There's a variety of solutions. A better financial aid program is one," he said. "I think (it's) the only one because that's what govern-

ment can do."

He also opposed a tuition freeze.

"I think it's very dangerous for me to be telling universities and community colleges what they should be doing," he said. "Because as soon as the minister of post-secondary education says (tuition fees) should go down, the next minister will say they should go up for whatever reason. You don't want government doing that kind of meddling with universities."

At Concordia ...

Researchers may have key to safe PCB disposal

Concordia University
Montreal, Quebec

by Aaron Derfel

A group of Concordia scientists say they may have discovered a safe and cheap way of destroying PCBs in oil so that it can be recycled.

Research vice-rector Cooper Langford said Concordia is the only university in Quebec working on this research. Although the three scientists have studied the project since last March, Langford said it looks highly promising.

"The key to our process is that we do it under mild conditions," he said, explaining that the scientists have been able to destroy PCBs (polychlorinated biphenyls) at under 100 degrees centigrade, or around boiling temperature.

The scientists have disintegrated PCBs in miniscule amounts of oil using a mixture of nitric and sulphuric acid while heating the toxic chemical compound with microwaves. After the chemical reaction, the PCBs disappear, leaving the oil uncontaminated.

The most widely used method of destroying PCBs is by burning them at 1,200 degrees centigrade. But

Canadian Federation of Students-Pacific chair Pam Frache was pleased with Strachan's proposals.

"We feel that this is a reasonable compromise," she said. Frache said the CFS would now continue its lobbying campaign to ensure the study "addressed the problems we face."

Geary said the spontaneous occupation at Simon Fraser turned the tide in the students favour.

Simon Fraser student council executive Christoph

Sicking called the study a "small step. But it's a step in the right direction. You don't do these kinds of protests all the time, but this is one time they had an effect."

At its Sunday January 28th meeting, the UPEI Student Union Council agreed to write a letter of support to the students of Simon Fraser University in their efforts for a tuition freeze and a Royal Commission on Post-Secondary Education.

Langford said the incineration method is costly, destroys PCB-laced oil, and is potentially dangerous.

One of the scientists working on the project, associate biology professor Perry Anderson, said they may be able to remove PCBs from electrical transformers without destroying the equipment. He said the process, called photo-mineralization, can also work with other hazardous chemicals.

"In principle everything seems to be working very well, but we have to get in the actual products that are being used by firms such as Hydro-Quebec," Anderson said. "We have yet to complete the work on samples of the nature that they use in transformers."

The scientists did not begin the research in response to the PCB warehouse fire in St. Basile le Grand last August, but stumbled on the discovery while studying something else. The PCB fire forced 3,500 residents from their homes for 17 days and sent a toxic cloud over the region.

Langford said Concordia is applying for a research patent and is negotiating a grant with Hydro-

Quebec.

Hydro environment vice-president Louis Philippe Roy said the utility is interested in the Concor-

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