

U. de Moncton Students Hold Mass Occupation to Protest N.B. Student Aid Plan

Fredericton (CUP)---About five hundred students from the University of Moncton, have occupied the Centennial Building here, demanding improvements in the province's Student Aid Program. The occupation began on January 28, a week after an

earlier occupation attempt fizzled in the face of government intransience. Students from the U. de M. participated in that attempt, but left when the other students abandoned the occupation the day it began. When they got back to

Moncton they called a general meeting at which it was decided to organize for an occupation. Committees were established, logistical planning began, and by mid-week the students were on route to Fredericton.

The U de M students' demands are the same as those advanced by the previous week's demonstration on student aid policy, a reduction in the loan ceiling from \$1800 to \$900 per year and increases in living and other allowances.

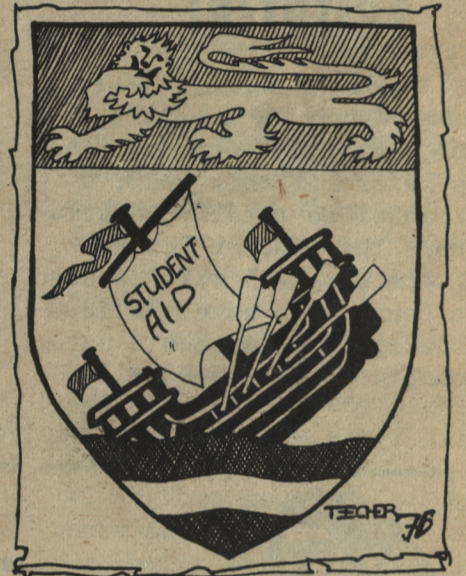
The students are occupying the lobby of the building directly below the offices of the Premier, Richard Hatfield. Hatfield emerged about five o'clock the first day of the occupation and read a prepared speech in French rejecting the student's demands, and claiming that no changes could be made in the program until federal legislation is changed in 1977.

The rejected Hatfield's position and told him they would stay until their demands had been met. The students appointed a negotiating committee of two to meet with Hatfield and Youth Minister, J.P. Ouellette. Meetings were held that day and the following evening but no progress was reported.

In those meetings the government reiterated its position that changes in the program cannot be made until 1977, while the students maintain that changes must be made effective September 1976. Negotiations are continuing and will likely go into the weekend (January 31).

Hatfield conceded however that there are "some problems" with the student aid plan, and has admitted that setting the loan ceiling is a provincial rather than a federal responsibility.

The occupation has achieved almost universal support among U de M students and faculty and among high school students in the Moncton area. Six buses of high-school students are



reportedly en route to join the occupation at the time of this writing. And on January 28, the U de M faculty decided to cancel classes indefinitely to support the occupation.

There has been little support from the UNB. Observers say this is partly due to the conservative politics and history of UNB, as well as the inexperience of the UNB student leadership in alerting students as to what is going on.

On the afternoon of the 28th about 15 students from UNB did arrive and were given a tumultuous welcome from the other students in the Lobby. Meetings on the UNB campus are being planned to encourage other students to join in the occupation and other campuses in the province are reportedly chartering buses to take them to Fredericton.

The students in the lobby are reported to be in high spirits, and are passing the time reading, singing and discussing. The organization has been described as excellent, with strike centres having been set up, courier service operating between Moncton and Fredericton smoothly, and even film and tape units being present to record events.

Discipline has not been a problem since the students have set up their own internal security in the occupation area, and no confrontation with RCMP or local police are expected.

Student Council Decides On Constitutional Changes

At its meeting last Sunday night, Council decided to recommend that major changes be made in the Student Union Constitution. In order to go into effect, they must still be passed by a general meeting of the student union to be held on Feb. 4th at 7:00 pm in Duffy Amphitheatre.

At its previous meeting, Council was presented with a proposal by Ray Shalala to divide Council into two bodies, one dealing with academic matters and the other with social matters. He also wished that number of Executive positions be reduced from five to three. Council decided to postpone the decision on the matter until this week's meeting.

However on Sunday Mr. Shalala did not re-introduce his proposal. Rather two similar ones were put forward. One proposed by John Jenkins, a Science Faculty representative and supported by Mr. Shalala suggested that the Council be split but that it meet in joint session about once a month. He also wished that the number of Executive positions be reduced from five to three with the chairman of each Council also sitting as a voting member on the Executive Council.

The other, proposed by President 'Woozy' MacDonald was the same as the above except that there would be five Executives.

During the course of the meeting a third proposal was made by Art Reddin, a Board of Governors representative.

He thought the split Council was a good idea but the Executive Council should only retain three people.

After a vote which lasted a half hour, Mr. Jenkin's proposal was accepted by a vote of 8-3-3.

In more detail the following structure was recommended by Council;

An Executive Session to consist of the President, the Treasurer, the Vice-President, and the chairmen of the other two Councils;

An Academic Council to consist of the President, the Vice-President, one representative of each faculty, the five Senate representatives, and the Bd. of Governors representative;

A Business Council to consist of the President, the Treasurer, the four class representatives, four representatives of the Arts Faculty, and two representatives of the Science faculty;

And a Plenary Session of the two Councils which would resolve disputes between the two Councils.

The rationale behind the change, according to Mr. Jenkins is to make the Student Union both more efficient and more aware of Academic matters.