

CFS Lives: Referendum Results in Question

by Kent Driscoll

The Canadian Federation of Students has shown the resilience of Rasputin on campuses across Canada. Many times they have been voted out across the country, only to rise from the ashes. By fighting various referenda on procedural matters, CFS has retained a lock on the student voice of Canada. It appears that UPEI may not be an exception to this trend.

At the Student Council meeting on Sunday, February 4, council met to accept the results of the referendum. While this referendum had a low voter turnout, the students who chose to exercise their democratic privilege decided to leave CFS. The motion to accept these results as accurate resulted in a tie vote, due in large part to alleged voting improprieties during the referendum.

It was brought to the attention of Council that due to the voting list that was used, some students were not

permitted to vote. The list, which had been used in a prior election, had names already marked off, which led to confusion among the Campus Police officers at the polls. While specific instructions were left by the Chief Returning Officer to disregard the prior markings, these instructions were not followed by some of the Campus Police, resulting in the officers not allowing students to cast their ballot, as it appeared that they had already voted.

As well, there have been allegations of vote-influencing by the Campus Police at the polling site. Some students have reported that comments were made by Campus Police which influenced voters. One reported comment was "Everyone else is voting No, you might as well too."

If these allegations are true, the result would be to disregard the referendum results, as these incidents are

obvious violations of UPEI Student Union election procedures. As well, CFS has earned a reputation for fighting referenda results across the country, and are sure to argue their opinion vehemently at the next council meeting.

The result of these allegations was to leave the Student Council at a deadlock. The vote to accept these results was a tie, and a further vote will be held on Sunday, February 11. The decision to table the discussion until the next meeting was done in order to allow for all the councillors to have their say, for a number of them were not present for the original vote. This will almost certainly break the deadlock, and a decision will be made.

If the council votes not to accept the results, by-laws of CFS prevent another referendum from occurring in the next six months, leaving UPEI members of CFS until at least May 1, 1997.

UPEI Cleaning House

by Christopher Michaud

As of July 1, 1996, the University of PEI will be opening its doors to allow some present faculty and staff members to leave. It will then shut its doors behind them, keeping who's left, for now, and adding on replacements.

The University's Retirement Incentives Program (or as I call it, RIP) enters into effect on July 1, 1996, affecting more than 100 faculty and staff members eligible for the program at this time. There is an even split between faculty and staff according to President Epperly's circular letter of January 16, 1996. But what does it all really mean?

The Program is all a mish-mash of numbers and calculations, fancy words, and veiled threats. RIP is really what it means -- death to a number of great professors, departments and faculties. The purposes of RIP are to reduce expenditures because of shrinking revenues, renew the University's faculty and staff (what are they, a bunch of old snowblowers?), and to renew academic and support programs.

The implementation of mandatory retirement policies at the age of 65 affects all faculty and staff as of July 1, 1997, whether or not they opt for RIP. That's a set rule by the Canadian government. There are a number of other points attached to the program. For all employees age 55 years prior to July 1, 1997, and whose combination of age and years of service add up to 80 or more, an actuarial reduction on their pensions is waived.

To me, none of it really means a lot, but probably means more to a banker or business person. RIP sounds like a good program for some. A few professors like the package and consider it too good to pass up. Others think it is awful, and feel they are being forced into it, especially those professors that are not yet 65, but their magic numbers add up to 80.

It seems the main purpose of the implementation of RIP is to dump some old profs and hire young blood at cheaper rates, to save some money. According to President Epperly's letter,

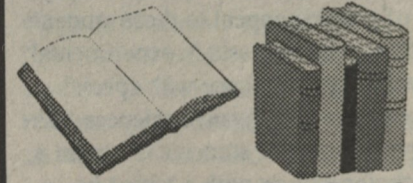
however, the University does not even know if they will be able to solve their financial problems with early retirement. The scary part is how the University plans to fill these vacancies. The letter states, "There are likely to be few probationary appointments this year, if any. Indeed... appointments are likely to be for no more than nine months."

Nine-month replacements, on temporary contracts, teaching courses. Few Arts and Science departments will escape the RIP axe, destroying the present healthy mixes in departments of senior, mid-career and junior teacher-researchers. Some of UPEI's best professors will be gone, replaced by a bunch of green horns looking to get their feet wet. While the letter says they are aiming at continuing tenured faculty, this is in contradiction to their plans to have nine-month substitutes.

A study was brought to my attention by a professor. Two studies conducted by McGill and Chapel Hill, N.C. showed that with early retirement,

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there was a loss in productivity. No time had been allowed to wind down research projects or pass them on to colleagues, creating losses in scholarships and research. The studies also mentioned that two years after senior employees had left, there was still no increase in productivity. There were only increases once administrators were retired.

So, UPEI is cleaning house. At what cost? UPEI may save some money. But what about the courses these professors taught? Will the quality be maintained? Will the courses even be offered? Once again, it is the students who lose out. The University hasn't realized it yet, thinking more in dollar signs than thinking about people. We will lose some very good professors. It is a great shame, and nothing to be proud of to save a few bucks.

Our next issue
will be March 5