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Press Clippings 1980

DIT Students's Union

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Bridge protest blocks traffic



Students from the College of Technology, Kevin Street, blocking O'Connell Bridge in their protest over the ban on examination work

A STUDENT sit-down on O'Connell Bridge over the disruption of examinations in Dublin VEC colleges, caused traffic chaos in the centre of the city yesterday evening.

Hundreds of students, mainly from the College of Tehnology, Kevin Street, converged on the bridge at 4.45 p.m. and finally dispersed at almost 6.30. Their protest over exams came as the Teachers Union of Ireland (TUI) joined the Dublin Colleges Academic Staff Association (DCASA) in banning exam work in the six VEC colleges. The DCASA is a breakaway from the TUI.

Mr. Kevin McCartan, president of hte Kevin Street College students union said at the outset that they would end their protest at six

decided to remain until he returned.

The student, Lorcan Folan, of Walsfort Road, Terenure, a final year physics and chemistry student, claimed he was sitting on his schoolbag when a garda came up and asked him if he would like to move. He replied that then taken by the arm and asked to go with they had voted to stay on the bridge. He was the garda

Supt. James Hennelly made repeated appeals to the students to move off the bridge as they were preventing popl from going home from work and going about their business. The students, however, ignored the appeals.

They did, however, agree to move to one side of the bridge, leaving the east side free

Mr. McCartan, the students' leader, said that as far as the students were concerned both unions were now "in the same basket." "Both are using the students as a pawn in a fight which the students did not cause," he said. The students' union want the Department of Education to intervene and settle the dispute.

The DCASA ban is in support of their claim for specific payment for examination work. They have also submitted a claim for pay parity with the universities.

The TUI issued its directiv on exams yesterday because it claimed that a structures agreement for the colleges was not being hooured. The TUI say the ban on administra-

TROUBLE AT COLLEGE

WHILE commuters, suffering for so long the appalling traffic congestion in our capital city, could hardly agree with the disruptive tactics of students during rush-hour on Dublin's O'Connell Bridge, yesterday evening, they certainly would support the aim of the protest—a speedy solution to the teachers' disputes now threatening to disrupt examinations for thousands of students in the Dublin VEC colleges.

Year after year, teachers in these colleges have imposed a ban on examination work to press their claims. Surely the exam work fees, or any other issues involved in such a ban, should be a matter for resolution through normal industrial relations machinery, rather than making students and their futures pawns in disputes in which they are innocent parties?

It will strike many people as an ironic coincidence that as the Teachers' Union of Ireland secures a pay award from the public service arbitrator, at the same time it directs its members not to undertake duties including examination work, in the Dublin colleges! That, at least to the hard-pressed taxpayer, will be somewhat hard to take.

The present industrial relations situation in the colleges is both difficult and complicated. The exam dispute seems to be symptomatic with other problems, like accommodation, the status of the colleges, finance and structures also involved. The current disputes in the colleges involve the Dublin Colleges' Academic Staff Association, who were formed as a breakaway union from the TUI as a result of dissatisfaction with a new structures deal for the technical colleges. Because it did not sign this agreement, the Association claims its members are now entitled to separate payment for examination work which became part of the teachers' normal duties under the agreement which the TUI accepted. In addition, the Association members are claiming pay parity with the universities.

The TUI went through conciliation and arbitration to secure the current recommendations on pay as a result of the awards to first and second-level teachers. However, the union now claims that the structures agreement is not being honoured because promotion posts are not being sanctioned and filled. The union also has threatened action if the breakaway group is recognised for negotiation purposes.

What a sorry foul-up in industrial relations. Is it not time that the Department of Education took action to solve this dispute, perhaps by referring it to the Labour Court?

Back to classes for VEC pupils

CLASSES returned to normal at the third level colleges run by the Dublin Vocational Education Committee pesterday, following the ending of a strike by maintenance staff.

Both day and evening classes resumed at the Bolton Street College of Technology and the College of Music, Chatham Row.

Day courses restarted at the College of Commerce, Rathmines, the College of Catering, Cathal Brukha Street, and the College of Marketing and Design, Parnell Square.

Part-time and evening classes will reopen in the College of Commerce and Kevin Street College of Technology next Monday.

Day classes at Kevin Street and evening classes at Cathal Brukha Street begin tomorrow.

PROTEST

the protest by students at the Dublin Institute of Technology offices in Mount Street has been called off, because the maintenance strike has ended.

The Chief Executive Officer of the VEC, Liam Arundel, has said that a sub-committee would investigate the student occupation.

Meanwhile in the High Court yesterday Dublin City Vocational Education Committee were accused of having used a sledgehammer to crack a nut when they sought to have three students committed to prison for failink to obey a court order preventing them from unlawfully occupying a school building last week.

Two students, Kevin McCartan and Vincent Treanor, apologised for their conduct which related to premises at 14 Upper Mount St.

The purpose of the sit-in was to bring pressure on the VEC to settle the dispute with the maintenance men.

SLEDGEHAMMER

Mr. Treanor apologised for having disobeyed the court order but felt that the V.E.C. had been totally unreasonable in bringing the matter to court, using a sledgehammer to crack a nut.

He said that thousands of students in Kevin St. school had been informed that their classes had been suspended indefinitely and it appeared to them that the V.E.C. had not taken enough action to resolve the dispute.

Two students apologise to High Court

TWO STUDENTS who continued to occupy the offices of Dublin City Vocational Education Committee at 14 Upper Mount Street, in breach of an order made by Miss Justice Carroll in the High Court last week, apologised to the court yesterday.

One of the students, Kevin McCartan, stated that the dispute, involving the VEC and maintenance men at Bolton Street College of Technology, had now ended, and he claimed that the students had brought pressure on the relevant authorities to receive it.

The court granted a continuing order against the two students and also against a third student, Patrick O'Doherty, preventing any further unlawful occupation of committee premises and directed that Kevin McCartan and Vincent Treanor, the other defendant, pay the costs of the committee's application to have them committed for having disobeyed the court order last week.

McCartan claimed that the Students' Union had been in dispute with the VEC, having been dragged into it. He claimed that the VEC had indicated that it would not seek costs against them but now it appeared to be going back on that.

McCartan said he felt the dispute should not have been referred to the courts and felt that the only way to resolve it was to

continue occupying the premises.

Treanor said he also regretted having disobeyed the court order but felt the VEC has been totally unreasonable in bringing the matter to court. He claimed that, in doing so, it was using a sledge to crack a nut.

Thousands of students in Kevin Street College of Technology had been informed that their classes had been suspended indefinitely and it appeared to them that the VEC had not taken enough action to resolve the dispute.

Treanor added that the serious consequences, if the strike had continued, would have been that the students' careers would have been placed in jeopardy. The courses might have been scrapped if the dispute had not ended and they felt they had no option but to keep up maximum pressure on the VEC.

Mr Eamon de Valera, for the VEC, said that, if a continuing injunction were granted against the students preventing unlawful occupation or picketing, it would not prevent them attending lectures or other legitimate business in the premises.

Miss Justice Carroll, who made no order to commit the students, pointed out that they had not vacated the premises until the industrial dispute had ended and, accordingly, had no merits in their submissions in this regard.

Rag marks end of student year

WITH THE coming of the end of year exams and the prospect of the long summer holidays looming most students are winding down their activities in the society, club and students union scene and are preparing for the year's last grind.

But not all students are in the throes of exam agony as here and there colleges are preparing for elections as in the case of Kevin St., or their main social event of the year, with Trinity's Rag Week due shortly.

In Kevin Street the students will be considered lucky by many to be sitting their exams at all in June. For until two weeks ago, the long drawn out dispute between the Dublin Dublin colleges Academic Staff Association and the Dublin Vocational Education Commit-

tee (V.E.C.) was continuing to threaten their exams.

But with the day of no return near, the DCASA withdrew their ban on setting exams and supervision. The relief of the students could almost be felt.

However according to Kevin McCarton, president of the students union in Kevin Street, the VEC almost brought the DCASA back out on dispute again after they stopped part of the teachers' wages for refusing to work part of what the union claimed was part of their holidays,

"I was particularly annoyed when this happened," declared Kevin, "as this decision by the VEC could quite easily have restarted the dispute."

In fact Kevin is quite worried by the fact the DCASA backed down without achieving any of their demands. He feels that this could lead to the issue being revived by what he says are "A very bitter teachers' union, bitter over the way they were treated by the VEC."

"I'm afraid that this could become an annual event with the students having to sit it out in the middle hoping for a breakthrough. Maybe next time we'll not be so fortunate," he concluded.

On a more lively note Kevin tells me that today sees the annual election for the full-time posts in the students union though with only two posts being contested as opposed to the usual three,

the normal excitement engendered by the elections may be missing when the ballot begins, particularly as the post that's not being contested is the presidency. Here Tom Conway, a final year Applied Science student was elected unopposed, probably because of his popularity, believes Kevin.

In the competition for the services officer job, a full-time post, there are four candidates in the race with three of these placed so closely in the advance polls that not many in the college are willing to take bets on the outcome of the election.

The three are: Fred Lee, a third year agriculture science student, Damien McKeown, a final year Biology student, and Sean Flynn, a final year

chemistry student. The fourth candidate in the race, first year electronics student, Basil Reilly, is seeking the post on the condition that he will operate, if elected, on a part-time basis. This, many believe, will go against him at the polls and he is being discounted as a serious contender.

In the part-time education officers race, Maura Hearty, a first year science student looks likely to win out over fellow applied science student, Vincent Traynor. Mr. Traynor is a prominent member of Young Fine Gael and it is because of his prominence in a political party that many believe that the electorate will favour Hearty.