

Electronics Students Raging At Hickel's Removal of Funds

Electronics Technician students at the University of Alaska have declared war after all funds for their

program were removed from the University's budget by Governor Hickel's office.

Students in the program have contacted Chambers of Commerce, Granges, civic groups, city and borough assemblies, student groups, and prospective employers to obtain help in their campaign.

Granges in the Fairbanks area held a public meeting Tuesday on this problem, and are enlisting the support of other state Granges in contacting members of the State Legislature.

Several employers, including one Federal agency, are writing to the Legislature in support of the program. In addition, at least one Representative from the Fairbanks area contacted the U of A while the publicity campaign was just getting started.

University of Alaska Presi-

dent William R. Wood and other officials will be traveling to Juneau next week to testify on the budget, and

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Students Raging . . .

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while there will speak in favor of the program.

With this support, the students hope to have the program restored when the University's budget goes before the State House of Representatives next week.

The original budget requested \$91,900 for operating the electronics program and \$60,000 to set up a new technician program—probably in civic engineering, although no decision had been made.

The \$91,900 would have covered all expenses of the program except providing the classroom space. The entire program was removed from the budget before Governor Hickel's office sent it to the Legislature.

Although the budget for the past year was only \$17,000 much of the cost of the program was supported by a Federal grant that will not be available after this year.

The program trains Alaskans to fill technical jobs in electronics. About 75 students are presently enrolled in the program, and 40 of them would be caught halfway through their training if the program were cancelled.

Although early classes were sponsored by the Federal Government, the newer of the two present classes (and any future classes) pay the same fees as any other U of A students.

About one-fourth of the students are Alaskan Natives; the others are residents of Alaska or military dependents. They range in age from 17 to about 35, and about one-third are married.

Graduates from the last class obtained jobs with salaries ranging from \$700 to \$1100 a month, with \$800 being the typical starting salary. John Rosa of the North Star Borough Community Action Agency says that the average earning of the men

before entering the course was about \$2,000 a year.

Rosa calculated that a man would repay the government for the expense of his education in three years due to his increased income taxes. Other studies have shown that, except for some who are in military service, almost all of the graduates are still in Alaska.

The Electronics Technology program was started by the Federal Government in 1963 under the Manpower Development Training Act. Over \$1.5 million was invested in equipment.

Foye Gentry, head of the program, said it had been established because there is an extreme shortage of such technicians nationwide, and that the problem is especially severe in Alaska.

He said Alaskan firms are now hiring technicians from the Lower 48 for jobs in Alaska, and that many of these people stayed for only a few years. He continued that training Alaskans not only reduced the employer's turnover problem, but kept their payroll in the state.

Gentry said the main complaint from employers was that the program wasn't large enough—there are several jobs available for each graduate.

President Wood said the program was a "very valuable course for the state in an era in which there is a great need." He added that it put people on a well-paying job at an early date and reduced the need to import talent into the state.

He said the Electronics Technician program and other University activities had created a "pool of specialized scientific and technical talent in Fairbanks which is very important—one of the most important assets the state ever had."