Escalators halted by state decree

By ATHENA SMITH
Editor

H.L. Griffin Hall regulars may not enjoy escalator service again for some time, according to state authorities.

Escalators were shut down when consultant Al Hopper pronounced them in state of emergency disrepair last August. At that time Acadiana Elevator Service's contract for maintenance of the escalators and elevators had just expired. The state Division of Administration had already opened bids on a new contract, but had not awarded it.

Until the survey was conducted it seemed that the lowest bidder, Acadiana Elevator Service, would again be awarded the contract. That firm has serviced the campus for the past two years.

However on June 23, two days after bids were opened, the state announced that it would employ a consultant to inspect the elevators and escalators. Upon receiving Hopper's report Aug. 20 the state froze further action on the contract and ordered the university to halt escalators in Griffin. According to Hopper some $200,000 in repairs on the escalators and elevators are needed.

"Upon learning of the numerous deficiencies we sent copies of the report to Acadiana Elevator Service asking them to respond and proceed with the repairs. They acknowledged that they would do only some minimum repairs," say Cornelius A. Lewis, assistant commissioner for the Division of Administration.

Lewis says that a stipulation of the expiring contract requires the service to keep the equipment in good operating condition.

Horace Myers, president of Acadiana Elevator Service, says his company refuses make repairs because the equipment is already in "tip-top" condition.

"The Division of Administration has been trying for years to award contracts to the manufacturers," Myers says.

Myers points out that Hopper is former employee of Otis Elevator Company, a major elevator, escalator manufacturer and fellow bidder on the contract.

Lewis counters that, "Though he is a former employee, he wasn't employed by Otis at the time. The state hired him as an independent consultant. Everyone who works as a consultant has to have gained experience somewhere."

Hopper is currently employed by J.K. Dawson and Associates.

Myers says that his company is considering legal action against the state. Lewis could not comment on the possibility of a counter suit.

The Interim Emergency Board recently denied a request by the Division of Administration for emergency state funds to make repairs.

Lewis says they are planning a second appeal to the board. If okayed, the repair project will go out for bid.

"I would venture to guess that a manufacturing company would get that bid rather than a service company, but bids will be open to all companies," Lewis says.

When asked why the Board denied the funding Lewis said, "It is my understanding that members of the board feel that the state is attempting to show favorable treatment to the manufacturers rather than the service companies.

"If they would look through, the majority of contracts that have been terminated in the past few years have been with manufacturers."

Until Acadiana Elevator Service and the Division of Administration resolve the matter USL will be without daily maintenance. This presents a problem in itself according to Dr. Wayne Denton, director of research.

He says that the six-month lack of daily maintenance is deteriorating to the condition of the equipment. At present the University pays the Acadiana Service to make emergency repairs, although no preventable maintenance is provided.