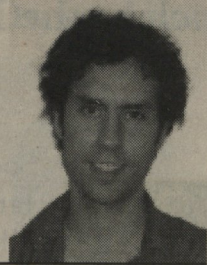


Right Here and Now



Rob Walker
Copy Editor

I love being used as a bargaining chip.

A week from today you'll either be reading this on your way to class, or you'll be wondering what's going to happen to your marks this semester, depending on whether the Faculty Association voted to strike or not.

Both sides have good points, really. The faculty merely want a wage on par with the average of other universities in the maritimes. The administration says that money has to come from somewhere and you can't get blood from a stone.

But it's pretty obvious you can get blood from a student. Or money, as the case may be.

The strike is going to happen (or not) regardless of what I write here, so I'll save my commentary on it until next week.

My point here is, if the faculty is seen as being in the right for striking because of unfair wages, why haven't the students gone on strike for unfair tuition hikes? Let me throw some numbers at you, I'll try and keep things brief because I hate math.

Tuition has increased over 100% in the last fifteen years. That's not a typo or an extra zero, by the way. In real life terms, what would have cost \$900 per semester in 1990 will cost you over \$1,800 today.

My question is...where did these costs come from? Did everything, wages, construction, benefits, etc. all double in 15 years? I'm no business or math major, but I just can't believe costs have risen that much in that short of a span.

The other side of this is, and I'm sure this is arguable, that the relative worth of these degrees seems to be declining. I know for my degree, a bachelor of arts in print journalism, my wages won't increase very

noticeably with that piece of paper. All it will probably do is make it easier for me to get a job somewhere that isn't in the frozen tundra.

Most of us aren't engineering majors, who are looking at bright shiny pay offers the second they graduate (along with hefty student loan debts). The majority of journalists don't make more than \$400 a week, or around \$10 an hour (many make less). Shit, I was making that when I was 16-years-old working tech support. And I wasn't carting around a \$20k student loan then either.

The question I'm asking myself is this: If I leave school and start working, slowly paying off my student loan, will I be better off than if I had continued my education? When you look at it as dollars and cents, it's pretty obvious what the answer is.

If I leave school now and work, I'll be making money rather than spending it. The two or four years I spend working will leave me with room for advancement, or offers of better work elsewhere. My reputation will grow and I'll have a little money to spend and save.

Counter that with trudging through school and ending up with a loan that will take years to pay off, slightly higher pay after you manage to pay it off, possibly a better position but probably not considering you're not the only one with that piece of paper. Plus you have no "real life" work experience.

If you're attending school to actually educate yourself or learn a skill and trade, then kudos to you, I hope you're able to use it well. But for the rest of you (and even some who are here to learn), is your money being well spent? Because even if it's in loans, this is **your** money.

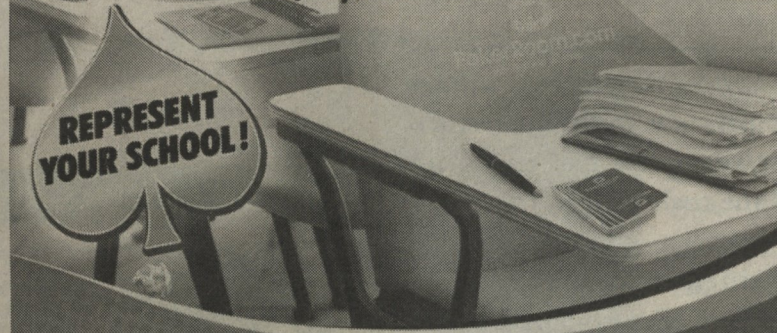
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Qualifier #4 Friday March 10 - 5pm	Qualifier #10 Friday March 23 - 5pm
Qualifier #5 Saturday March 11 - 5pm	Qualifier #11 Saturday March 24 - 5pm
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