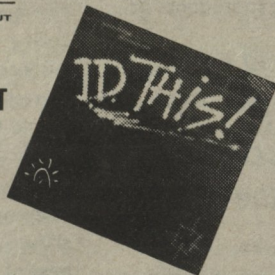


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6/X-Press/September 23, 1993

Opinion

Student loan drama

Taking a second look at those poor misunderstood P.C.'s

Last August Kim Campbell's new cabinet announced a host of much-needed changes to the Canadian Student Loans Program (CSLP).

While loan limits and allowances have been frozen for the last nine years, the government has now increased the maximum assistance from \$3 570 to \$5 100 for full-time students. For part-timers, the maximum has been increased from \$2 500 to \$4 000. These increases should help offset the tuition hikes students have endured over the last several years, and will take effect in the 1994-95 school year.

There are other changes to the program too. For example, women pursuing doctoral studies (especially in the areas of engineering, applied science, math, and in the physical sciences) will receive grants of up to \$3 000 each. In 1994-95, three hundred women will be eligible for the grants; however, the numbers of grants available will increase to 650, 1050, and 1250 in the following years.

Another change to the program deals with students with disabilities. As many as 5 500 disabled students will see grants of up to \$3 000 each, and the number of grants will increase to 7 350, 7 718, and 8103 in the following three years. As well, the government plans to retain the forgiveness provision under the new financial structure.

"At Risk" students (such as single parents with low incomes and those on social assistance) may be eligible for grants from the government of up to \$750 each. The government foresees the eligibility of 16 600 students in this category. That would mean grants, given to those who need them most, of almost \$12.5 million.

Other changes to the CSLP include interest relief for graduates with low paying jobs or who are employed part-time. In addition, an estimated 33 000 borrowers in repayment will be eligible for relief assistance.

In the words of the Minister, Bernard Valcourt, "The reform package...streamlines the administration of the program allowing more money to be available for students." And he added, "These measures reflect the most significant changes to this important national program since 1964."

And what do our student representatives have to say about all this? So far the only reaction from the Canadian Federation of Student (CFS) has been that they are glad the three per cent fee has been scrapped, but are furious with the package because interest on the loans will accrue when the student leaves school (interest used to be subsidized for the first six months that students were out of school); however, students still don't have to make any payments - principle or interest - until six months have passed.

While the federal government is trying harder, and moving to implement thoughtful, much needed changes, the CFS seems bent upon keeping students, who they claim to represent, in the dark about the benefits of this package. Why is the CFS not willing to divulge both the benefits and drawbacks to such programs? Only after being given all of the facts can we students make informed choices...

The Kim Campbell government is only six months old and already has moved to make a difference. Kim Campbell will continue to make such needed changes if elected on October 25th. Please vote Progressive Conservative, it's our future.

JASON LEE