

# N.B. Students Respond To Government Poverty Claim: Priorities Questioned

**EDITORS NOTE:** The following is the best of a statement made last Sunday night by Bernadette Landry, one of the organizers of the New Brunswick student aid occupation. The statement came during impromptu celebrations marking the 100th hour of the occupation, and in part deals with the conditions being faced by the students, and in part their response to the government's claim that it can't afford more for student aid.

The occupation has run smoothly since it started and morale continues to be good. Much of the time is spent reading and in study sessions, where student aid

and other issues are discussed. Musicians abound, and a song has even been written about the student aid struggle.

It begins: "Good morning Mr. Premier", then outlines each of their five demands, and ends "We're going to stay and fight."

The already existing gap between the populace and the government is widening at an alarming rate. The present student aid problem is a perfect example of such a situation.

Two years have passed now and New Brunswick students still must undertake measures to improve the student aid program. All diplomatic at-

tempts at negotiations have failed. Students have reached the point where they are occupying a provincial government building in order to get their point across. The student community is accepting the sacrifice of personal comfort for this cause by submitting itself to these deplorable living conditions. These students have now been sleeping on a cold terrazzo floor for five days. They know not the dark for the lights are left on 24 hours a day. They are continually being humiliated by provocative measures such as the blowing of whistles and slamming of doors at all hours of the night. How much are we expected to take? Patience does have its limits.

During his 1974 election campaign Richard Hatfield stated, before U.N.B. students that if his government was elected student aid would consist of a reduction of the loan and an increase in the bursary. Whatever happened to this promise? His answer for the last five days (during which the students have occupied the Centennial Building) has been: NO MONEY.

Besides the 20 million dollars invested in the Bricklin venture, many more investments are questionable. How to explain the following:

- 1) 10 million dollars have been invested in the Wiltaker Textiles Company. This company went bankrupt but investments keep being poured in.
- 2) 1.5 million dollars have supposedly been invested in a project to set up technical courses in Saint John (where the unemployment level is at a minimum in the province), but these courses have never been given.
- 3) four million dollars in federal money allocated for the bilingualism program have been transferred to general funds in the provincial budget. To what purpose was this money used?

4) The government found the means of leasing itself a new 1.5 million dollar airplane while severe cutbacks have been imposed on ministries as important as Health, Education and Youth. At least education would be a secure investment! We can remember the impact of these restrictions: among others the cutbacks in the number of teachers last year. It is therefore the whole population of New Brunswick that

suffers from the effects of such an administration.

In front of such flagrant injustices the government should begin to feel some guilt and admit to its own incompetence.

What are the priorities of the Hatfield government? Everyone should have the right to an education; it is definitely not a luxury. But looking at the present situation of the loan and bursary program, we see that in New Brunswick it is rather a luxury than a right. Let us remember that the lower level of education in a country, the more vulnerable it is to exploitation.

**BULLETIN:** Early Monday morning police in Fredericton came in and forced the student protestors to leave. The Cadre does not have any information at this time as to what the students' next move will be but it appears that meetings were held yesterday to decide what, if any action will be taken. No one was injured as the police move met with little resistance.

Photo Courtesy The Brunswickan and Steve Patriquen



Students jammed into the Building Lobby, each looking for a place to sit

