

Student aid policy changes likely, but not next year

Student aid officers from all ten provinces will be meeting in Ottawa next week to discuss possible policy changes, but no major developments can be expected before 1976-77 at the earliest.

This is the word from Dave McPherson, provincial student aid director, who will be attending next week's meeting. He said Friday that the meeting is one of a series of "study sessions" designed to look at the student aid situation and devise a new program to replace the present setup.

The ten provincial student aid officers are members of the Federal-Provincial Task force on Student Assistance, which was set up last summer by the Council of Education Ministers. Its purpose is to deal with the federal government on student aid matters.

McPherson said he hasn't seen the agenda for the meeting yet, but some of the topics to be discussed will probably include aid for part-time students; how much debt a student should have to assume; gearing repayment plans to the amount a student earns rather than to the amount he or she owes; and possibly collecting student loan payments by payroll deductions. However, he said these are "just guesses" as to what will be discussed.

The Prince Edward Island government has yet to formulate definite policy statements on these issues, he said. He gave no indication of when such policy statements might be forthcoming.

Full time students in PEI -- that is, students taking three or more full credits -- are currently eligible for a maximum of

\$1400 annually from the Canada Student Loans plan, and a maximum of \$1000 extra from the provincial government in the form of a bursary. A means test is used to determine need, and the entire \$1400 must be borrowed before any bursary is granted.

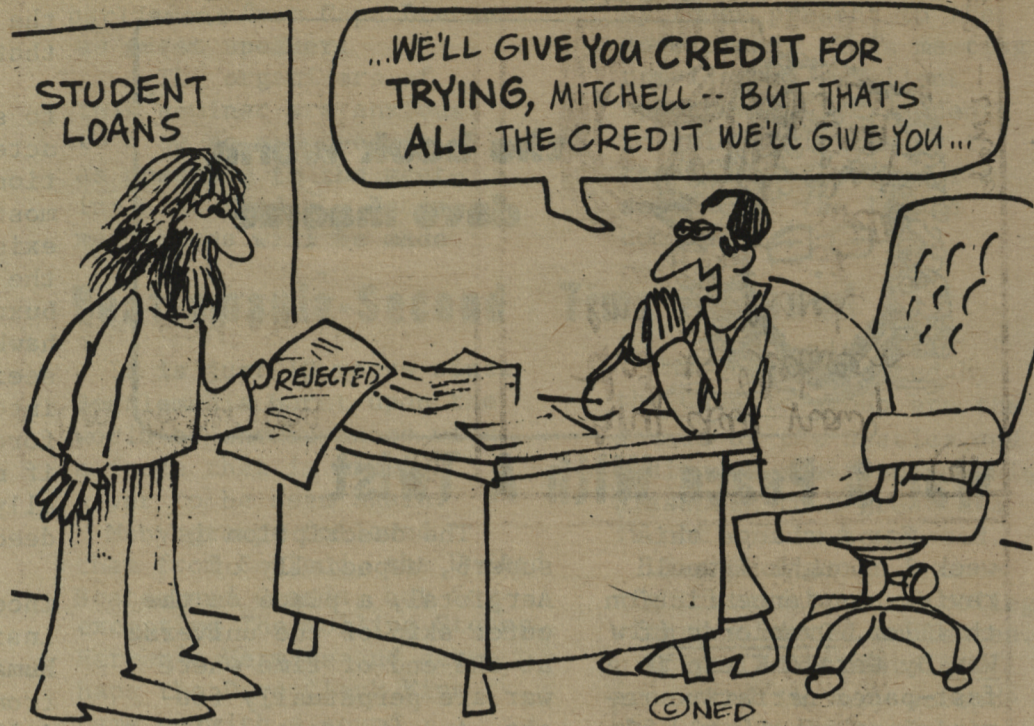
Students taking fewer than three full credits are not eligible for assistance under the present plan, but McPherson said there are "more and more part-time students every year" and a program of "part-time aid for part-time students" might be of benefit. However, he gave no commitment that any such program would be instituted.

The biggest problem with aid for part-time students would be determining who really needed it, he said. "A lot of part-time students are fully employed", he said, "and it would be difficult to know how much aid they really required."

Ontario has an experimental part-time student aid program, said McPherson, but even there a sizeable number of students don't qualify. "No matter what type of program you institute, not everybody's going to be happy."

As for the total amount of student aid to be made available to each student in the future, McPherson said there would be adjustments made in next year's program to compensate for inflation, but any basic change in Canada's student aid philosophy will have to wait at least two years. Student aid research takes a lot of time, he said, and the provincial officers can't meet very frequently because of logistical problems.

McPherson admitted that in a great number of cases, "student aid is not enough.



Graphic from the Martlet

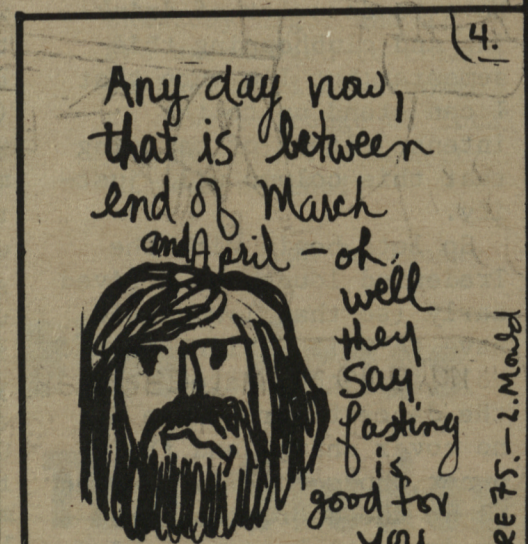
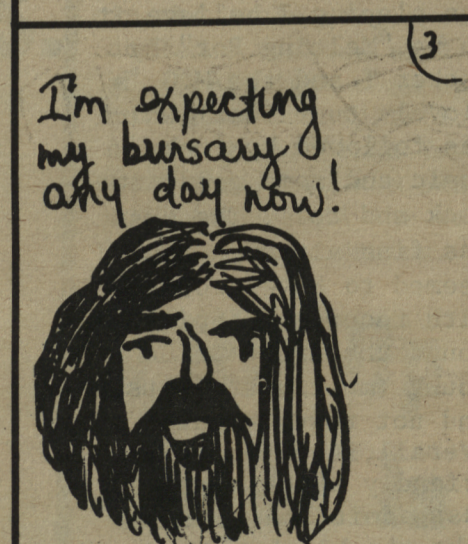
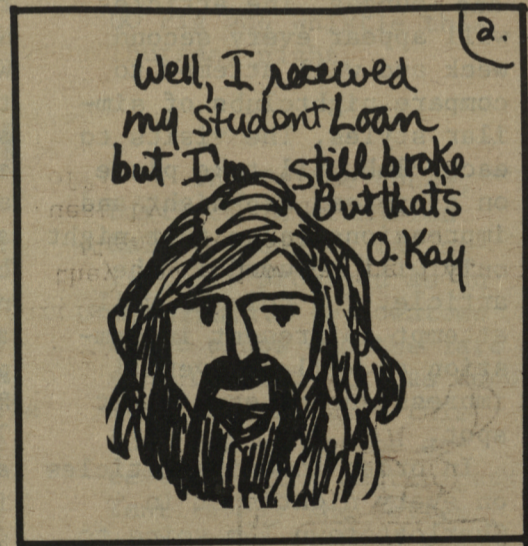
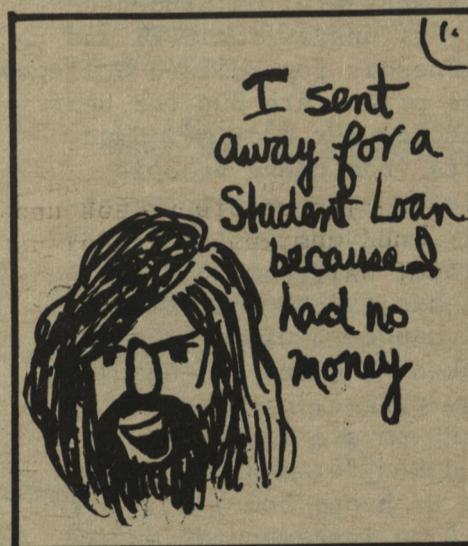
It's difficult to live just on the \$2400 maximum you can get in aid in PEI."

PEI uses the "table formulas" to calculate how much a student should be able to save over the summer. First year students fresh out of high school, having only 8 weeks in which to work, are expected to save \$250, second year students \$530, third year students \$556 and fourth year students \$585. This does not take into account differences in wages earned by different students in the same year, but McPherson said there are appeal procedures open to students who have been unable to save the specified amount because

they had a low-paying job.

When asked about a request by the student aid officer at Mount Saint Vincent University in Halifax that women be required to save less than men because they usually get lower-paying jobs, McPherson said, "I don't agree with that. There are federal regulations now that ensure equal wages for women, and Statistics Canada has even found that women have a tendency to save more than men." Again, he said appeal procedures would protect any women who might be victimized by unfair wage scales.

BY DAVE MCCURDY



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