

Sheila Copps Visits UPEI

Deputy Liberal Leader hears questions on education

Wednesday, October 6 - Deputy Liberal Leader and Hamilton MP Sheila Copps visited UPEI over lunch. Ms. Copps, accompanied by Liberal MP George Proud, a Liberal Youth Official and Liberal MLA Ron MacKinley, spoke briefly about her party's priorities, including "Real empowerment, sharing the decision making process." She made a plea for support in light of what she saw as the Liberals' chances to form the next Federal Government. She was critical of the Federal Government's handling of Student Aid, and to support this point she said that Kim Campbell still owes \$16,000 in student loans. Ms. Copps seemed to feel that this gave the Prime Minister's student loan policies less credibility.

Ms. Copps also dealt with the issue of a national daycare program. She said that a Liberal government would institute such a program, provided that an annual growth rate of 3% could be achieved in the economy.

Following her remarks, Ms. Copps proceeded to take questions from the crowd of students gathered in the Pit. One of these questions (asked by this reporter) was a request that, in light of how many students are so pressed to pay for their education, she specifically state Liberal policy regarding: transfer payments and the federal financing of education, student financial aid, and consulting students on changes to the federal aspects of these issues. She replied by saying that the Federal Government could not be trusted with transfer payments since it had negotiated an agreement with the provinces on transfer payments and then decided to ignore that agreement. She claims a Liberal Government would guarantee the provinces an "iron-clad" five year period during which transfer payments would not decrease.

On the issue of the Canada Student Loans Program, Ms. Copps mentioned her party's opposition to the recently eliminated 3% tax on Student Loans, and that she would like to see an increase in the amount of funds available; however, she could not offer any further specifics.

Todd King, Student Union President, questioned Ms. Copps about "risk-sharing" reforms to Student Loans being proposed by the Conservatives. On the issue of the Federal Government's ongoing negotiations with two banks to privatize the Canada Student Loan Program to a high degree, Ms. Copps indicated

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that the Liberal Party was opposed to privatization and felt that it was advantageous to "keep a variety of banks participating." When King asked about proposals for the Federal Government to share the risks incurred by students receiving loans with provinces, Ms. Copps could not offer specific information on this topic but did suggest that Mr. King could call the Liberal

education critic, Manitoba MP Ron Duhamel, for more details.

Ms. Copps was also questioned by a student who talked about his own difficulties as a single parent and a mature student trying to make ends meet. He asked her if a Liberal government would be prepared to reform the Canada Student Loans Program in order to address the needs of many students in situations like his. Specifically, he wanted to know what support a Liberal government might offer for mature students with families who were going to school for job retraining. At it stands, he could drop out of school and receive Unemployment Insurance or social assistance, but cannot receive as much assistance from the government while going to school at U.P.E.I. in order to better provide for his family. Copps continued next page...

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