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Canadian Federation of Student Services

we are all lined up in the rink there will be a well lit sign saying doctors, engineers, scientists and nuclear physicists, etc. come this way. You have complimentary tickets from us, the feds, to a free education whereas the artsies will be heading for another sign that reads "welcome to a debt load that will last you for the next twenty years" cause you can't do anything to benefit the immediate demands of our economy so we aren't going to do anything for you.

The federal government refuses to play a role in addressing the most basic question of how higher education could serve the countries needs.

Since the cutbacks began in 1976 the gap between the lower income and the wealthier has widened. The federal government is planning a restricted access to and deteriorating the quality of post-secondary education because of the current economic crisis. They are doing this for two basic reasons; one political and the other economic. Politically, they hope to raise the public awareness of the federal role in funding of PSE which has not been visible. They have already increased their visibility by creating the crisis and may further enhance their visibility by moving to a "voucher" form of student aid. Economically, it fits in with their economic policies of fiscal restraint, which devastates essential rights and services of the disadvantaged while pouring more funds in to the wealthier sector.

The University of Quebec and Montreal has declared that if the

proposed reductions in their grants go through, they will not take in any first year students next year. Faculty face layoffs and wage settlements way below the cost of living.

What the governments have overlooked and I stress Provincial as well as federal is the huge financial commitments students already make to their education in the forms of foregone earnings. Student loans enforce extra responsibility due to anticipated additional earnings after graduation. Beyond that here on PEI especially, the current employment situation is certainly no guarantee of a high-paying job after graduation. How long will it take our provincial governments to see the masses of young Islanders with and without PSE trampling over the top of them in a scramble to hop on a plane and reach Alberta. At least there's hope there of finding a job and even MacDonalds in Alberta have a higher minimum wage.

The debt load faced by students benefitting from the loans presents additional problems. According to data presented in the Task Force report, 1/3 of all borrowers in their final year 1978/79 had accumulated debts in excess of \$4,000-\$5,000. 12% of those who received loans and had graduated reported extreme difficulties in repaying and over 20% of those who wanted to go to a PSE level and didn't, plainly couldn't afford it.

What sort of student financial assistance is it that penalizes the people in most need with the largest accumulated debt, and rewards those in

least need with the largest income tax giveaways? (i.e. revenue loss to education deductions, tuition deductions, and the Canada Student Loan Program operating costs could be used for a national bursary program and could be financially feasible.

The public for the most part has been left out in the cold during the decision making process of cutting PSE funding. Students, potential students, staff and faculty have been left with little to say, and even less impact into the cutbacks which hurt them directly.

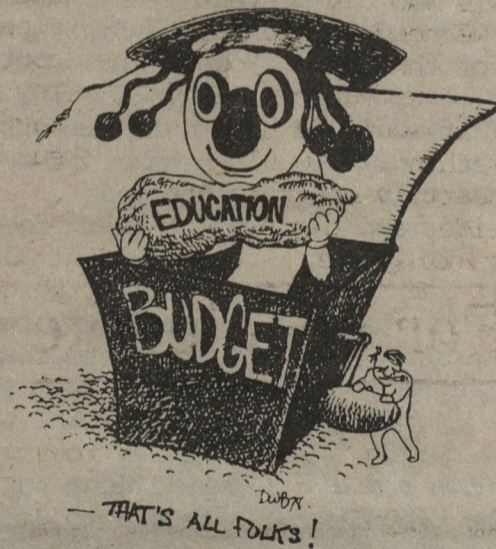
In the 70 years of federal inpy in PSE there has never been a public inquiry into higher education. There are national standards for health and education is in dire need of such a standard. The government has chosen to sacrifice all of the cultural, economic, political, and scientific roles that PSE plays in the development of Canada in favour of satisfying the immediate demands of industry.

Now what is going on

is to help out the situation. There is an organization fighting every minute of the day and every statement from the mouths in Ottawa, it is the Canadian Federation of Students, a very integral part of our education and accreers as they join together almost a 1/2 million strong trying to improve the quality and accessibility to education.

Here on PEI Terry Palmer and myself are in touch with the media and with ongoing talks with our minister of education, Fred Driscoll. All he can tell us is that things are "still up in the air" and they are not through rehashing them yet. It looks like a definite increase and who knows what from there! God knows how many of us will be back next year!

All I can ask as your representative is that you stay tuned to the CFS and maybe work with the organization and if down the road you find yourself in front of a referendum ballot with your new president John MacDougall, think about it, you can't lose if you vote for CFS.



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