

## Copps's statements false

During a question and answer session at the Pit, Sheila Copps, when unable to answer a question about student aid, told an outright lie about the loan status of the Prime Minister.

First of all, even before dealing with the fact that Ms. Copps wasn't telling the truth, let's examine the nature of the information released. That someone has defaulted on a loan of any sort is privileged information; it is not for public dissemination. It is a shame that Ms. Copps has adopted the old-fashioned, mud-slinging style of politics when substance failed her. This is not the kind of politics people ask for. It is the kind of politics that makes people lack trust in politicians in general.

However, the creation of lack of trust goes beyond the type of mud-slinging practised by Ms. Copps. The comment was an outright lie. In stating the misinformation, Ms. Copps has given Canadians an example of the ugly side of politics. Garth Staples of Malpeque said of Ms. Copps's comments, "It is exactly this type of stuff that gives politicians a bad name, and turns young people off about the political process. Students can't help but get the impression some politicians will say anything to get elected". Regrettably, in the case of Ms. Copps, she will.

Ms. Campbell's \$16 000 grant wasn't a loan at all. It was a Canada Council Grant to study in England, a scholarship. Last time I checked, scholarships didn't have to be repaid. Ms. Copps's false statements have once again damaged the credibility of politicians in general and the Grits in particular.

It is a shame that politicians can't learn to keep their mouths shut when they don't know something or have no answer to a question. The fact the Liberals have no policy on student aid is bad enough, compounding that with a personal attack on another politician worse. The fact that the accusation was an outright lie adds to the seriousness of the offence Ms. Copps committed in her question and answer session in the Pit.

Edward Lank

## Students no deadbeats

Dear Editor,

Yesterday, I attended a forum in which Sheila Copps stated that our Prime Minister, Kim Campbell, has defaulted on her student loans. After receiving a call this morning from a concerned Islander, it came to my attention that this might put in the minds of some people that all (or at least a great majority of students) default on their loans. Thus, I am compelled to write this letter in defence of the greater majority of students across Canada and to express my concerns about the Tory policy on Student Aid reform.

First of all, I must make it clear that I do not make a habit of Tory bashing. I am not affiliated with any political party, nor have I ever been. My concern is related to the Student Aid program and its ability, or lack thereof, to make higher education accessible to all those who merit it. I do not care whether our future Prime Minister wears red, blue, green, or an off shade of purple. I do, however, care about whether future Canadians will be given the opportunity to achieve their full potentials. The current system does not do this, and the changes proposed by the Federal Tories will make it harder still for poorer Canadians to achieve the training and education that they will need to contribute successfully to our society in the future.

Put yourself in the shoes of a person who has no income, no willing co-signers and no collateral. You do not have the skills needed to get a job in today's market, but you desperately want to feel self worth. You are ambitious and intelligent but your roots are meagre and your opportunities limited. What are your options?

1. Go on welfare and collect \$12,000 a year indefinitely.
2. Pressure your local politicians for a patronage appointment in an area such as highways and then collect unemployment for nine months of the year indefinitely. You will likely make a little over \$15,000 a year once you've gotten established.
3. Apply for a student loan and associated provincial bursary and attend university fulltime.

The maximum amount of funding available through student aid is \$5,600. Tuition and Student Fees at UPEI total \$2,726.00, books are extra. You are now left with \$2,874.00 on which to live for the year.

Furthermore, contained in the Tory policy on student aid reform is a proposal to ask the banks to share the risk on defaulted loans. Currently student loans are guaranteed by the federal government. Asking the banks to share in this risk may well lead to potential students having to pass credit checks before becoming eligible. Those without co-signers or collateral would be turned away, making the whole concept of student aid redundant.

Student loans available only to those who don't need them? This is the risk that we all must share if the Tories are allowed to make such a change.

What does this say about the priorities of our government? It says that people who are currently unemployable are encouraged to stay that way. It says that post secondary education is an elitist privilege reserved for those who can afford it. And most of all, it ignores the fact that there are people out there who would rather contribute to our society but are forced by the structure of our social programs to become a burden.

That being said, I feel it should be known that the current default rate on student loans in Canada is 5.2%, a rate far below those of small businesses and even corporate Canada. Just because Federal Tories don't always come clean on their promises, it doesn't mean that all students are a bad credit risk. The greater majority of students do eventually pay back their student loans, become productive members of our society and contribute to our economy in more ways than one.

The moral of the story? By putting tax dollars towards the education of our population we are investing in the future of our country. It makes both dollars and sense. Students do put back what they take out during those years of study. It's the Prime Ministers that we have to watch.

Sincerely,  
Todd King  
President, UPEI Student Union