

OTTAWA

## 1500 demand education funds at the Hill

(CUP) - About 1500 native Canadians marched to Parliament Hill last week to protest formula funding of native schools and new government limitations on funding for post-secondary education.

Carrying signs which read, "Save our future generations - stop formula funding," and "Canada is afraid of educated Onkwehonwe", natives marched to the hill to present a petition on native education to members of parliament. Native leaders addressed the crowd.

"We have not come here as beggars," said Gilbert Whiteduck, director of the First Nations Education Council of Quebec. "In our treaties, the government promised to fund Indian education for all our people, for all levels (of education), but they haven't lived up to that promise."

Until 1986-87, all natives who applied to a post-secondary institution received full funding through the Post Secondary Education Assistance

Programme. In 1986, for the first time a limit was put on the programme's budget and in May 1987, further restrictions to eligibility were announced. This fall, many native students found themselves enrolled in programmes they could not afford.

The march, organized by the Assembly of First Nations, brought busloads of natives, many of them schoolchildren, from as far away as British Columbia.

George Erasmus, National Chief of the AFN, questioned the rationale of the federal government in limiting funds for native education.

"Just at a time when our young people are deciding to stay in school, and slowly they are starting to come back to their communities to properly represent themselves, to become employed, to carry out their dreams, the government is cutting them off."

"The cost to keep someone on social assistance is higher than the cost of giv-

ing them a university education. Whether we had treaty rights or not, it doesn't make any kind of sense for Canada not to enthusiastically encourage young people to go to university," he said.

Jo Norton, chief of the Mohawks of Kahnawaki was less diplomatic.

"We are angry and we won't stand for what this government is trying to do," he said. "Our community is tired of being told that yes, you have the right to develop and plan and become educated and then a new government or a new minister of Indian Affairs comes along and takes the money away," said Norton, who brought 11 busloads (500 people) to the rally from Quebec.

"We demand more resources now, and if that means someone else is going to have to do without, so what? And if it means someone else has to suffer, well so what? We have been suffering for centuries.

"And if we have to become physical and if we have to create confrontations then

maybe that's what we'll have to do," he added.

Whiteduck said the AFN had asked Prime Minister Brian Mulroney to receive the petition, which outlined native rights to education and to control over their own education and was signed by 5000 native people from Quebec. The Prime Minister declined.

"I guess we just aren't important enough," said Whiteduck.

Liberal MPs Keith Penner and Warren Allmand received the petition and promised to raise the issue in the House of Commons.

"Unemployment among Inuit and Indian people is many times higher than the national average," said Penner. "Welfare is debilitating and insulting. This government is restricting and limiting funding for education and at the same time it is spending millions to sell the Canadian people on a trade deal to the United States and it is prepared to spend billions on nuclear powered submarines. I say to the prime minister:

wake up. Get your priorities straight."

After the presentation of the petition, the demonstrators formed a huge circle on the lawn in front of the centre block. Some played traditional drums and sang while the bells in the clock tower chimed in disharmony behind them.

"I want to study translation so I can go back to my community and teach," said a young high school student from Restigouche, Quebec, explaining why she wants to go on to university. "I hope we'll be able to afford it."

Another teenage boy from Weymontachie, also in Quebec, said he didn't know if he would go to university. "I'm going to try," he said. "It depends on this (pointing to his head) and it depends on them (pointing to the parliament buildings)."

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(CUP) - Canada's business community's lack of commitment to education is "appalling," says Ontario NDP leader Bob Rae.

He said companies shouldn't gripe about the quality of graduates if they aren't prepared to make a contribution to the educational system.

"When you look at their record of charitable donations, it's appalling in comparison to most other parts of the world," he said.

The issue of cutbacks in university funding isn't fully understood by the government, according to Rae.

When universities are underfunded, "People don't go to university, people drop out, and faculty and researchers go," said Rae.

Rae said that the public supports the concept of education as an investment, "even if it means going into debt."

## Rae chides business community

"My view is that this notion (of education as an investment) has been seriously underplayed and underestimated," he said.

Increases in the deficit wouldn't allow for immediate free tuition, remarked Rae. "I can't promise you that we will eliminate tuition fees in four years," he said.

Government intervention is also needed to help address the lack of affordable housing for students, Rae said.

"The only way to deal with the housing crisis is for the public sector to get into the business of building houses again." He added the government does not spend or invest money in housing because it's afraid of interfering with the private sector.

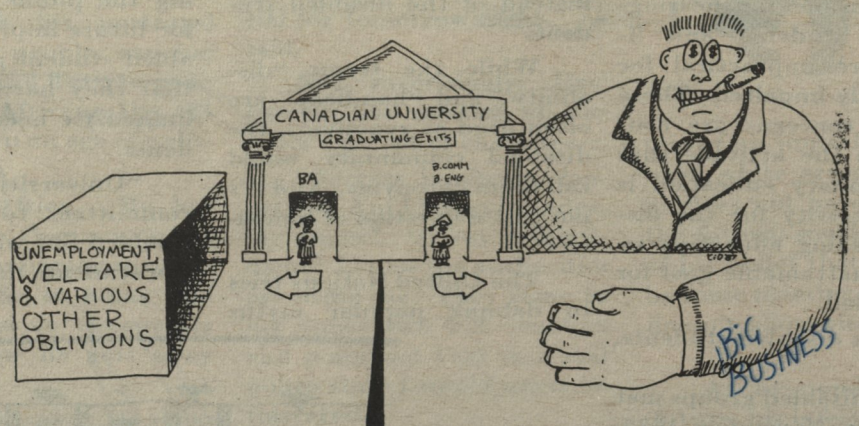
Reflecting on the changes on campus since he was involved in student government, Rae said there's now an "atmosphere of 'me

too.'" Students aren't as interested in rebelling against the establishment, he said.

As opposition leader, Rae said he'll do all he can to influence the Liberals to implement policies on post-secondary education.

Rae said he views the NDP's role as constructive even when other parties borrow NDP ideas.

"I'm just as interested in seeing good things happen as anyone else," said Rae.



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