PODIUM

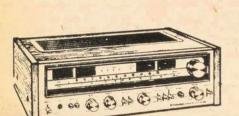
Crucial year for student ai

ARGYLE T.V. SALES AND SERVICE

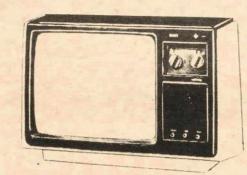
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By Jeff Champion

Student aid is always a difficult topic to discuss. The programs of loans and bursaries available to students across Canada are all very complex, with each province combining federal and provincial contributions in different ways. Often you begin discussing one detail of a program and end up arguing over basic political and philisophical principles of the relationship between government and individuals in society.

This is a year in which crucial decisions will be made concerning the future of student financial assistance in Canada. A Federal-Provincial Task Force on Student Financial Assistance was initiated last year. A discussion paper from this Task Force should be released by late November. As well, a study of student aid programs in the Maritime provinces was completed this spring by a special committee of the Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commis-

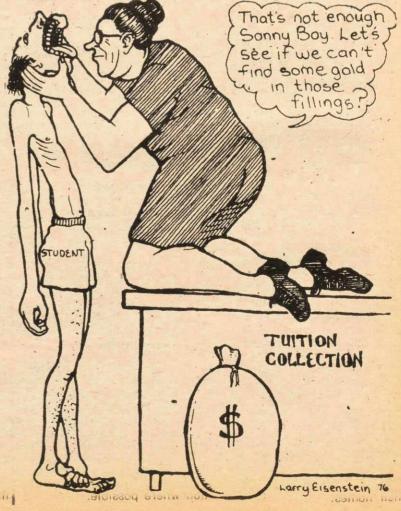
There are many basic prob-lems with the existing programs which have led to the need to re-examine student aid. Despite the complexity of present programs (with application forms which take hours to complete) there is a high degree of arbitrariness in the assessment of individual cases. While many students do not receive adequate assistance, others may receive more than enough. There is much debate over how much of his or her per-

sonal income a student should have to invest in an education. and how much, if any, parents should be required to contribute. Another major concern is the amount of debt which many students incur through government loans. These problems will not be easily resolved.

A student financial assistance program which guarantees that the postsecondary educational system is accessible to all qualified students will mean an increase in expenditures for both the federal and provincial governments. It is my belief that education represents an investment in the cultural and economic future of our society, and that these expenditures are more than justified.

The success of any attempt to revise student aid programs depends on input from the people directly involved. Student organizations on the national and provincial levels are working to present their views to government, and their success depends on the involvement of informed and concerned students. Do yourself and your fellow students a favour. Write a letter to your M.L.A. or your Student Union, or drop in for a talk.

(Jeff Champion, vicepresident of Dalhousie student council, is a member of the executive of the Student's Union of Nova Scotia which has recently submitted a brief to the federal-provincial task force on student aid.)



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