

Cullen defends manpower centres

OTTAWA (CUP)—Despite federal statistics revealing record student summer unemployment this year, federal Employment Minister Bud Cullen praised the performance of student manpower centres and said returning students had enjoyed "considerable success" finding jobs this summer.

The National Union of Students says Cullen's statement uses misleading statistics to present a "cheery" image of the summer job

market and that its claims are "ludicrous".

Cullen's claim that student manpower centres placed 20 per cent more students than last year is unimportant with student unemployment reaching 15.1 per cent this summer, NUS spokesperson John Doherty said. "Most of the placements are attributable to new government policies requiring projects for the first time to hire summer help through manpower centres anyway."

An employment ministry spokesperson later said the policy was "traditional," and that most new placements came from jobs created by the Young Canada Works programs.

The greatest part of the 20 per cent placements increase came in minimum wage private sector jobs for high school students. Placements for post-secondary students in the private sector increased only seven per cent, according to the release.

"The minister's suggestion that returning students had considerable success in finding summer jobs seems to rest on August statistics," Doherty said. "These were collected August 20, after more than 86,000 students had given up looking for a summer job. Had these students continued to look for jobs, the figure for student unemployment would have been 16 per cent, rather than the 6.4 per cent reported in the release, and the 7.1 per cent reported by Statistics Canada."

The employment spokesperson said the ministry's statistics branch had recommended using the August figures, and that the NUS concerns were "valid".

"It's a sad statement that the government has nothing better than August figures to show how good the summer job market was" Doherty added. The employment minister told NUS earlier this year that they were no longer surveying the summer job market for students. And Statistics Canada only admitted that a detailed breakdown of the summer student job market would be possible after "considerable prodding".

But the employment spokesperson said the ministry did in fact have detailed figures for this summer, and the information had been made available to her "at the beginning of October."

She said she would have liked to have had the release out earlier than Nov. 21, but the "bureaucracy and approval procedures" had been responsible for the delay.

"The whole government attitude is one of cheerful words about dealing with unemployment when its stated economic policy is to leave unemployment untouched," Doherty said.

PQ gov't answers

MONTREAL (CUP)—A province-wide petition and threatened occupations by students a member institutions of L'Association Nationale des Etudiants du Quebec (ANEQ) has finally brought some response from the government, according to ANEQ information secretary Daniel Pacquet.

Pacquet said ANEQ received a call from Rene Levesque's office last week inquiring about a meeting with the organization. Quebec education minister Jacques Yvan Morin had not responded to a letter from the association sent more than a month ago.

Pacquet said the occupation, planned by 15 ANEQ member unions for Dec. 1, will occur despite Levesque's acceptance of a meeting.

In the provincial petition, students demanded the abolition of tuition fees, free education materials, and more equitable financial aid system.

Student union spokespersons at English Montreal universities support the move and believe the demands are not unreasonable. "We think it can be done, it's nothing unrealistic. It's just a question of timing," one Concordia spokesperson explained.

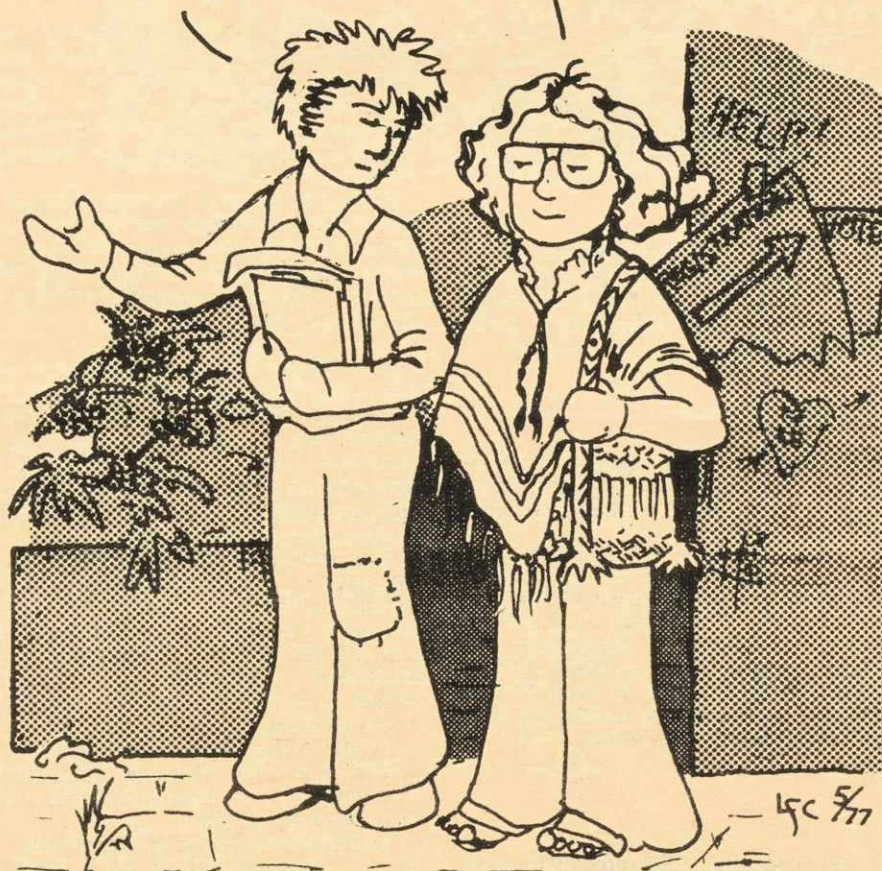
Free education was promised in the Parti Quebecois platform last fall, he said.

Another spokesperson criticized the existing loan system in the province that places heavy costs on parents and students.

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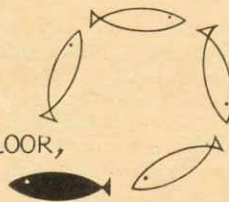
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