

The ABC's of education

A-Accessibility: When tuition fees go up, generally accessibility to post-secondary education becomes a matter of cash rather than merit. Student aid usually fails to match increases in tuition fees and is intimidating to many to get into in the first place.

B-Board of Governors: The highest and most secretive decision making body in the university. Why the most secretive? How else could they possibly make the kind of blunders they do while under public scrutiny? Usually an amalgam of high profile locals, government appointees, a few administration hacks and slightly seasoned with the token student representatives.

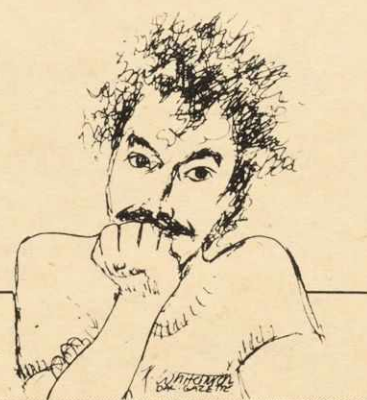
C-Canadian Federation of Students: A funny sort of national student organization. Is supposed to be a cross-breed of politics and services. The politics is mostly a matter of perpetuating themselves and the services are things you wouldn't ordinarily think of as services you pay for — a travel agency, an expensive speakers bureau for student

unions, and a discount card that's prime function seems to be for picking locks at St. Mary's University. In Ottawa they also do a bit of lobbying and research from time to time. The money you pay into it would probably be better spent on lunch.

D-Donahoe, Terry: Nova Scotia minister of education. Man of a

thousand excuses. Some of his favorites are: *universities are not underfunded, and there is only so much money in the pot.* Rather than give us the same lines over and over, he should number his excuses and just say something like "24" when asked about why Nova Scotia's post-secondary institutions are falling apart.

E-EPF or Established Programs Financing: The old term for transfer payments from the federal government to the have-not provinces (us) for post-secondary education and health care. Over two years the federal



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Liberal government cut out some \$378 million nationally out of their transfer payments to the provinces. Last fall the Canadian public cut out a good deal of Liberals sitting in the House of Commons. There is some justice in our political system, as minute as it may be.

F-Faculty: Your professors. A breed of person rapidly discovering that university wages are becoming less and less competitive with the private sector. The net result is that eventually the talented ones leave, leaving the less talented

ones responsible for your education. Something to do with the declining quality of education.

G-Grants: Better than loans because you don't have to pay them back. An increasingly difficult thing to obtain in a time when they are most needed.

H-Holding Tank: Something universities are being referred to as. Refugees of a bad economy are turning to the universities in record numbers only to find universities ill equipped to receive them.

I-International Students: A group of people on campus who pay an awful lot more than Canadian students to be here. In addition, many basic rights you and I take for granted are denied them, such as the right to look for mostly non-existent employment here. International students are mostly coming from wealthier countries, while Third World nations find it increasingly difficult to send students here. Education is perhaps one of our best forms of Third World aid, although the Canadian government has not gone great guns on it simply because it prefers forms of aid that are tied to business contracts for Canadian firms. Which brings us to the question, who is really aiding who? (See rant in one of future columns).

J-Jobs: Something students are supposed to get over the summer, but 25 per cent of you probably won't. Also something to dream about after graduation.

K-Killam: Badly underfunded library.

L-Loans: Something many of you will have to pay back in a big way after you leave here. If you need a loan to get through your education, then arguably you probably should have had a grant. But tell that to the silly people who make up these silly rules in the first place.

M-MPHEC-Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission:

These folks usually get the funding debate started each January. The way it works is that they recommend one figure, the university presidents grumble that it is not nearly enough, then the provinces follow through and give even less. Was originally put together to recommend realistic levels of funding for universities. Provinces have shown they prefer picking numbers out of a hat instead. Sound like a screwed-up process? Sure is.

N-National Union of Students (NUS): Predecessor of CFS.

Rather than fizzling out like many of the other national student political organizations that have gone before it, this one dissolved into CFS in a grand scheme to collect more fees and provide basically little more for it. After this funny little scheme was completed they somehow ended up further in debt than they had been before. Recommended reading for new CFS treasurer Rusty James: *Dick and Jane Have Fun With Numbers.*

O-Olley: Current chair of aforementioned troubled national student organization.

P-Post-secondary education system: Supposedly our salvation

in the transition from an industrial economy to an information based economy. Politicians have yet to figure this out. Politicians should be sent back to post-secondary education system to do so.

Q-Quality: Something being eroded by underfunding. Inadequate facilities, overcrowded classrooms, underpaid professors, antiquated equipment, understocked libraries ... all contribute to the decline in the quality of education you receive.

R-Rationalization: An interesting little concept being tossed about mostly in Ontario at the moment. How it works is that universities and colleges become more specialized, cutting out programmes that might be offered elsewhere in the province. Also smaller colleges become absorbed into universities as satellite campuses, losing much of their local autonomy. The net result is that if you live in Northern Ontario, for example, and Forestry isn't your cup of tea, you have to travel a great distance to get into a university that has the programme you want. The net result is that not as many students can afford to do that and don't see post-secondary education as a viable alternative. Fewer students in the system means the government gets off the hook for funding their share of those education costs. Some bureaucrats maintain that rationalization simply makes the system more efficient. More efficient for fucking little small-minded bureaucrats sitting in Toronto that is... Could be coming to a province near you...

S-Students: You. What the whole thing is supposed to be about. Despite this, student participation in the decision making processes of the university is mostly token.

T-Tenure: Something professors are finding harder to get. Without tenure professors have to be a little more careful about what they say in public. The thought police are not particularly fond of certain professors who are opposed to — you guessed it — the status quo. An important part of academic freedom.

U-Underfunding: Something rampant in the post-secondary education system.

V-Varsity: Intercollegiate sports. Slowly becoming extinct as economic pressures kill one team after another. Anybody remember the Dal Football team? Go Tigers Go.

W-Women: They make up more than 50 per cent of the student body and less than 25 per cent of the faculty. Hmmm.

X-X: Marks the spot on the ballot that will kick out the clowns that have brought you this disaster of an education system. Don't waste it.

Y-YPCs or Young Progressive Conservatives: Something it evidently helps to be if you want to sit on the Student Aid Higher Appeals Board in Nova Scotia.

Z-Zero: What your degree will be worth if you don't get out there and do something about the decline in education now.