

**cross-canada briefs**

**BC government freezes tuition fees**

VANCOUVER (CUP) — Going against the trend of provincial governments slashing social programs, British Columbia Premier Glen Clark has announced a one-year freeze in tuition fees at all BC post-secondary institutions.

Clark told students gathered at Langara College he wants to send a message to other provincial governments about slashing social spending.

"We must protect health care and education funding from these federal cuts," Clark said, promising, "not a 35 percent tuition fee increase, not a 20 percent [increase] like Alberta and Ontario, but zero — a freeze on tuition."

The announcement comes hot on the heels of Clark's March 15 promise to create 11,500 jobs for BC youth through a new job creation program.

Clark says the announcements are part of a series planned for the weeks leading up to the next legislative session. The purpose he says is to draw "a clear difference" between his government and opposition parties.

Michael Gardiner, BC Chair of the Canadian Federation of Students, gave credit to the provincial government for responding to widespread student appeals.

"Finally, we have a government which listens to the concerns of students and appears to recognize the need of our society for a more accessible public post-secondary education system," he said in an address following Clark's speech.

But Gardiner was quick to qualify his enthusiasm.

"We sincerely hope that today's announcement is not a one-shot deal," he said.

Clark would not commit to extending the tuition freeze beyond next year when questioned by reporters, pointing to planned cuts to federal transfer payments.

**McGill TAs protest salary cuts**

BY ZACHARY SCHWARTZ

MONTREAL (CUP) — Approximately 300 teaching assistants at McGill University took the day off on Friday to protest cuts to their salaries.

The action comes in response to the administration's salary proposals on the 22-month anniversary of the beginning of negotiations between McGill and the TA union.

On May 5, 1994, the union demanded a salary of \$28.75 per hour. McGill offered its own salary proposal this March 5 — \$10 per hour with a maximum of \$15 per hour, and no cost of living increase.

According to union coordinator Hugh Potter, this represents a 55 per cent cut in McGill's TA budget.

Currently, TAs are paid from as little as \$7 per hour in some engineering departments to as much as \$21 per hour in some arts departments. Undergraduate tutors, Potter pointed out, are paid \$12 per hour — more than what McGill says it's willing to pay most of its TAs.

McGill contends that its salary offer is fair.

In a press release, Robert Savoie updated McGill's position on its negotiations with the TAs.

"The first offer tabled by the University is comparable to rates paid by other Montreal universities," wrote Savoie.

McGill's \$10 and \$15 offer is far lower, however, than the Canadian average salary of around \$27 per hour, according to Potter and the union.

In his update, Savoie reiterated the arguments advanced by McGill vice president Bill Chan. He outlined that "because of government funding cuts, the money available to pay teaching assistants will have to reflect these cuts."

The university is all too aware of its funding situation.

"McGill is quickly paying down its accumulated deficit by running at an annual surplus," read a recent union document circulated to its members. "These surpluses are being run at the expense of TAs who have not had a pay increase since the mid-1980s."

The document outlines that — apart from TAs — all other academic, support, and administrative staff at McGill have had their salaries scaled to the cost of living index since at least 1989.

**Waterloo students may get say on tenure**

BY MICHAEL PLATO

TORONTO (CUP) — Students at the University of Waterloo may soon get a chance to help decide who gets tenure and who doesn't.

The university's administration has put forward a proposal which may eventually lead to students participating on faculty and department tenure-granting committees.

The proposal was put forward last year by Waterloo's student council and was endorsed by the university's provost in a proposal given to faculty and departments this January.

"[It is not only] important to have the student perspective...[but it will] give the students a broader perspective of tenure," said Jane Pak, president of the council.

"[Students] will stress the importance of teaching...students are the recipients of teaching," she said.

Under the proposal, students will sit on tenure committees as observers without voting privileges for a two-year trial period.

Student representatives on the committees will be selected by the students' council and approved by deans.

**Natural Law flies into town**

BY DANIEL CLARK

The Natural Law Party — which has flooded Halifax papers with ads this past week — gave the first of eight scheduled, high-flying lectures yesterday at Saint Mary's University.

Gilles Bigras, head of the Halifax chapter of the Maharishi Vedic Education Development Corporation (MVEDC), is organizing these lectures to publicize his organization and the courses it offers.

"To get a better world order you have to take care of the individual," said Bigras to the small audience.

The Natural Law Party, which is the political wing of the MVEDC, is best known for their campaigning during the 1993 federal election.

The primary purpose of the party is to raise awareness for the MVEDC. If the party is elected, it promises to harmonize Canadian government in a more cooperative coalition rather than remain in its present adversarial system.

"When you are a national party, people listen to you," said Bigras.

The organization's push in Halifax is to get people interested in Transcendental Meditation (TM), but it also offers courses in astrology and the famed yōgic flying.

Although the MVEDC is a non-profit organization, to receive instruction in TM costs \$1,070 (\$642 for students). This is for four-and-a-half hours of one-on-one instruction. Bigras said the money is a donation and will be accepted in as many monthly payments that the student can afford.

"Yogic flying is really the advanced TM course," said Bigras. "You don't actually fly. When your body reaches the total inner peace, the body jumps. We call it flying. — If I did it now, you would see me cross-legged jumping up and down on a mat."

"When someone fakes it, you can see the effort of the jump, but when it's done for real, there is no effort. It takes at least 10 minutes of meditation to reach this state, and we recommend 20," he said.

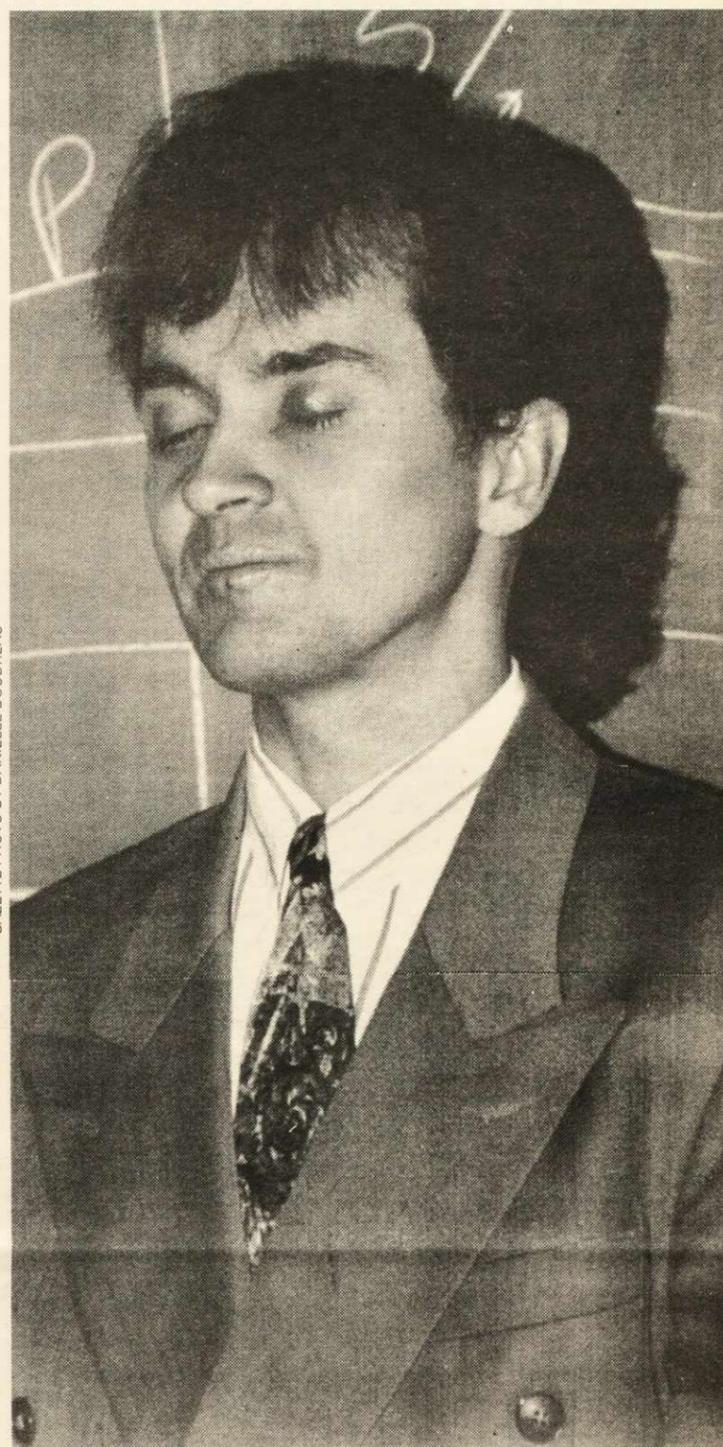
The philosophy of the organization is that humans are capable of seven states of consciousness. In our regular lives, we normally experience three, which include waking, sleeping, and dreaming. TM supposedly takes the meditator to the fourth state, pure consciousness, and opens the way for them to achieve the final three otherworldly states.

"What releases stress is sleeping; you feel better, but the deepest stress doesn't go away. When you meditate, it is even more restful than sleep, and releases that stress," he explained.

For a student using TM, it is a little like cheating on a test because it opens your mind to levels of academic excellence you never thought possible, Bigras said.

"I first discovered TM in high school," he said. "After that, studying had never been so easy."

"Psychology says we use 5 per cent of our active mind. Meditation quietly activates our mind, and it expands. It brings the active mind to the source of thought. A thought is like an air



GAZETTE PHOTO BY DANIELLE BOUDREAU

Halifax Natural Law Party leader Gilles Bigras meditates for a moment while speaking to people at Saint Mary's University.

bubble, and we want to train the mind to access all levels of thought, and not just the air bubble. Thoughts display our inner energy," said Bigras.

TM is designed to open that door of consciousness, said Bigras.

"How to act without straining," he explained. "Less effort to accomplish more."

The lectures will hit Dal on Monday, April 1 at 7 p.m. in SUB room 310, and Tuesday at noon in the SUB council chambers and at 6:15 p.m. back in 310.

**Reduce sentences, petitioners urge**

BY PATTI WALLER

Last Tuesday, a petition was circulated in the Student Union Building (SUB) by three women in defense of the men convicted of aggravated assault on Dalhousie student Darren Watts in the fall of 1994.

The petition asked for signatures of those who believe that the sentences received by Watts' attackers were too severe.

Natalie Sutherland-Velásquez was one of the petitioners.

"We used to go to church together," she said. "I know Damon (Cole) from the side of everybody makes mistakes; not to say that what they did was right and that they shouldn't be punished, I just think that their sentences were too long...you could tell that he wanted to change his life around."

Although Velásquez did not

organize the petition, she stated that she wanted to "do her share."

"Damon didn't deserve eight years...but that's just my own opinion...in particular, we wanted to ask black, fellow blacks, because it's pretty hard sometimes, being black...and so we just figured that you know, support from your fellow race is a good thing," she said. "We all did it, but I, in particular, would go to blacks first."

One of the black men she approached was Mike Arsenault, who is a past vice president of Phi Kappa Pi, the fraternity of which Watts is a member. Arsenault was also one of the main witnesses for the prosecution in the Watts case.

"I found out after," said Velásquez. "I got a good laugh out of it...I don't really care, 'cause I'm doing it for my friend Damon."

Arsenault maintained that his