

# Keeping the provinces in line; Regan's plans

by Cathy McDonald

The federal government has at least three methods up its sleeve to get what it wants with its education dollars, Secretary of State Gerald Regan said Monday.

Speaking at the Weldon Law Building, Regan said he will make sure the provinces take their share of the responsibility this time, when the federal-provincial funding agreements come up for negotiation in March.

Since a method of block funding was agreed to by the provinces and the federal government in 1977, the proportion of provincial contributions has steadily decreased, from 35 down to 21

percent of universities' costs in some provinces (26 percent in Nova Scotia).

The federal government wants to make the public aware of where its money is going, namely its disappearing into provincial coffers, where "methods of fudging" hide how little is spent.

"We are interested in stopping the erosion of the provincial funding component, and increasing the federal component" Regan said.

Despite the fears and accusations prior to the November budget that funding to post secondary education would be cut, the federal government commits itself to increasing its

support annually according to inflation. However it may alter its method of delivery in one of three ways:

- funding universities directly
- establishing an independent commission to administer funds
- the voucher system.

Direct funding makes sense, according to Regan because "if you spend it, you're more careful." He also argued that the trend towards greater transfers to the provinces and less direct spending by the federal government must be averted. Direct spending has decreased from 55 to 33 percent of the federal budget in 20 years, people should identify more with the federal government as the source of funds, he said.

Regan played with the idea of an independent commission with representatives from both levels of government and from universities, to decide education funding policy.

Regan said he would only consider a bureaucratic voucher system, where students receive money to spend on education, if negotiations with the provinces break down.

On the heels of a federal-provincial conference where the strong inferences were made to universities' inability to provide Canada with enough technically skilled graduates, Regan disputed the belief that the federal government wants to push university programs in this direction at the expense of core (arts and science) fields. "Big Brother" government should not play this role, he said, as it is too remote to know what regional needs are. The power to decide what to do with its money should be left in the universities' hands.

Admitting that the shortage of skilled labour is serious in Canada, Regan said this is a separate problem, to be worked out at the community college level, and not with funds earmarked for post secondary education. The job training programs recently initiated by Employment Minister Lloyd Axworthy come under this category. Canadians' freedom to choose their own university

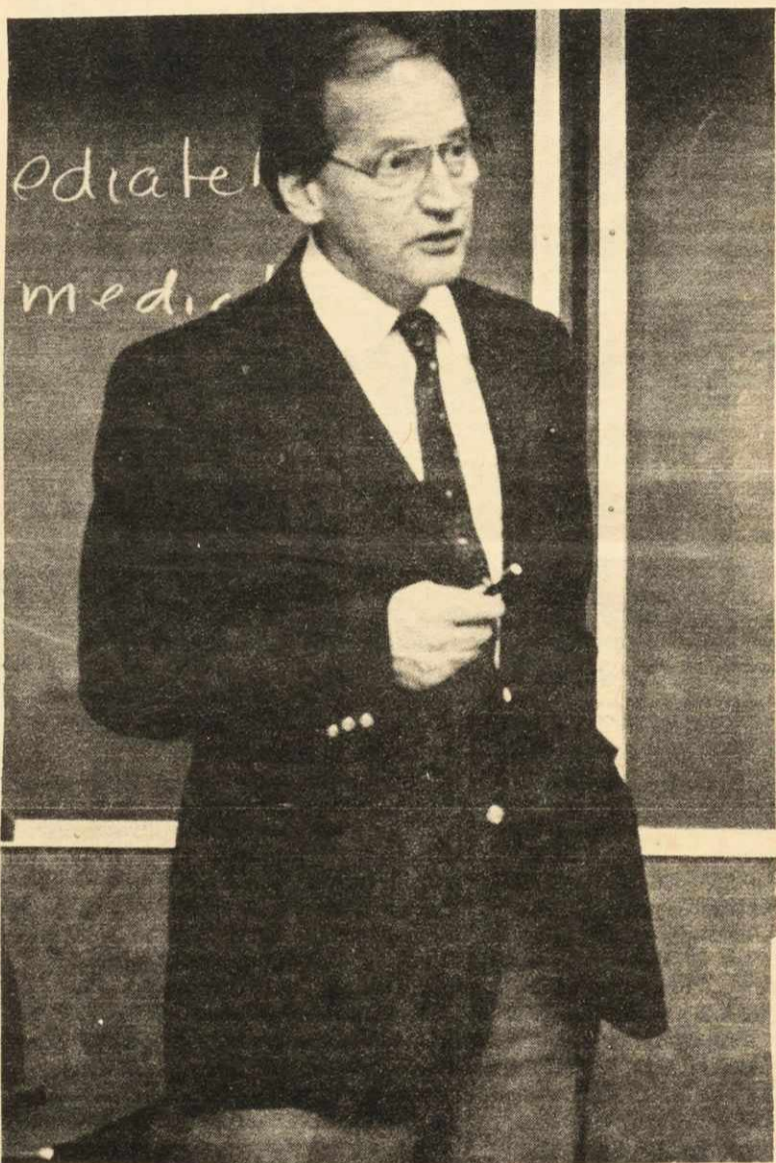
courses should not be compromised, he said.

Although the federal government now places more emphasis on technical research through grants, Regan said this is merely expanding on what is already administered by the department of science.

Regan does have certain national objectives, which include greater mobility for students between institutions, more teach-

ing of the two official languages and a move towards education in the mother languages of minority populations.

Fielding a question from the audience, Regan agreed that the national student loan program had not kept pace with the provincial program. The federal government is presently talking to the provinces about a new program, as it "hasn't done a good enough job."



Childerhose/Dal Photo

Regan pledges support for post secondary education.

## First-year debaters do well at McGill

by Richard Payne

Two first-year debaters did a fine job of representing Dalhousie at the Annual McGill University Winter Carnival Tournament held Feb. 4-6 in Montreal. The Dalhousie team finished in seventh place of 70 teams participating.

Ken Mills, a graduate of the University of Calgary and a first year law student, and Catherine Ricketts, a first year arts student, won four of the six debates they participated in. In addition, Mills was ranked 19th among the 140 debaters in the tournament.

The McGill Tournament is one of the oldest and largest Parlia-

mentary style debating tournaments in the world. This year's champions were the University of Sydney, Australia, who defeated Yale University in the final round.

Transportation difficulties resulted in only one Dal debater arriving at the World Championships in Toronto last month. As a result, Brian Robertson teamed up with Tara Mont of the St. Mary's University Debating Society in the tournament.

Sodales, the Dalhousie Debating Society, meets Thursdays at 7:30 p.m. in Room 113 of the Weldon Law Building.

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