

Prof holds class on legislature steps

post-secondary education has to be more important, students say

BY SHELLEY ROBINSON

Just like every Monday morning Andy Wainwright stood in front of his 9:30 English class playing Bob Dylan on a portable stereo and trying to make his students talk about why it was relevant. They were a little

his stereo, and his microphone, but they couldn't read the signs soaking on the outside gate. And they could probably hardly make out the "For the Public Good Support Higher Education" sign that the lone protester not allowed through the gates carried back and forth in front of them. And they definitely couldn't hear what the man in the cap was saying.

He was asking the students, huddled in hoods and soggy gloves, if they thought it was the first, tenth or hundredth time someone played

among the wet Airwalks and hiking boots. And the two people walking out of the legislature didn't seem to understand what people were doing listening and interpreting music in front of Province House.

Which just went to prove the group's point.

After all, the word "university" wasn't even mentioned in the televised Mar. 5 Nova Scotian leader's debate.

But Robert Chisholm, leader of the provincial New Democratic Party (NDP), says he recognizes the importance of post-secondary education.

"There's a problem in terms of dealing with the funding cuts to post-secondary education," he said. "[But] we don't believe the answer is to continue to increase tuition fees.

"If you sit around and ring your hands, as government, about how to properly fund universities — all the while universities are jacking up the tuition fees," Chisholm added.

David Harrigan, a spokesperson for the Liberals, says his party also understands the importance of education.

"We consider that growth in the economy, education and health are the cornerstones of what we need for Nova

Scotia's future. But we're not going to have any of those... unless we have a balanced budget," he said.

"[Education] is very much on our minds. We've said all the way along that we're going to endeavour to fund universities to a level where they can freeze tuition fees."

Tara Erskine is the Progressive Conservative (PC) candidate for Halifax-Citadel. Having graduated from law school in 1995, and still paying off her student loan, Erskine says she understands education issues.

"I don't believe students are being heard. I agree education has not been enough of an issue in this election, it's been about health care," she said. "I am in support of increased funding for education, providing we can pay for it.

"We don't want university to only be for the rich. There has to be a base

level of support so that tuition doesn't spiral further out of control."

Tim Church isn't sure of the event's tangible success, but at least he's doing something.

"I'm not sure how effective it was but it's better than nothing. It's better than saying 'yeah, I watched the

leaders' debate... and I turned it off, gosh they look like morons."

And so, no louder than when they came, but a lot more wet, the students headed back to campus, across town

— class was let out a little early.

With files from Megan Hamilton



Photos by Ryan Lamb

reluctant at first. But then again, the hail bouncing off his Arizona Diamondback's cap was the same hail that was making their clutched copies of lyrics look more like wilted kleenex flowers than demonstration pamphlets.

A class of 30 students gathered at the doors of the provincial legislature on Mar. 9 to protest what they say is a lack of attention to post-secondary education in the provincial election campaign.

The class, Bob Dylan and the Literature of the Sixties, is taught by Wainwright.

Wainwright played the 1989 Dylan song "Political World" to highlight what he says are problems with government funding for higher education.

"There's going to come a point where classes like this won't be available," he said. "On whose backs is the budget going to be balanced? [Post secondary education] can't afford to take any more hits."

The two security guards watching from inside were leaning forward enough to see the man in the cap, and

Bob Dylan on the steps of the legislature. And even though they were all cold, they all laughed.

Wainwright says some of the lyrics to "Political World" — "we're living in times/where men commit crimes/and crime don't have a face" — are particularly relevant to the problems facing post-secondary education.

"It's a crime to under-fund higher education... and that's why we're here," he said.

Tim Church, who attended the protest and is a student in the Dylan class, agrees.

"There's always got to be a group that is going to say... 'Look, we're here — we may be a small group but we don't agree with how business is being done.' We act as a check on the power structure," he said.

"I'm not that much of a leftist-pinko guy but I still believe it's important for public input."

The two pairs of dry leather loafers and heels looked out of place



News in brief

Student union develops Bill of Rights

The Dalhousie Student Union is developing a Students' Bill of Rights intended to protect the interests of students in the event of a faculty strike. The policy statement, "Taking Ownership: A DSU Plan of Action", describes the Bill of Rights and details the DSU efforts to keep students informed of what is happening in contract negotiations.

"Students are frustrated because up until now [they] have been left out of these contract discussions," says DSU president Chris Adams.

"We are using this plan of action to tell the parties involved that students' interests need to be given greater priority."

The "Taking Ownership" plan has two purposes: to create awareness among students through classroom blitzes and mail-outs; and to increase pressure on the Dalhousie Faculty Association and the administration to settle their differences.

Sweatshops not okay for Duke students

Students at Duke University will now be able to wear their school sweatshirts with pride.

The North Carolina school introduced a Code of Conduct which will hold all companies that do business with the university accountable for the conditions under which their products are manufactured. Sections cover issues such as worker treatment and maximum work hours per week. The Code was modeled largely on existing international standards, such as those embodied in covenants of the International Labour Organization and other bodies of the United Nations.

The Code is a triumph for Students Against Sweatshops, an organization whose members negotiated the terms of the code with university administrators.

Students against Sweatshops insisted that the Code include sufficient enforcement teeth so that it would not end up being a cosmetic cover for business as usual. For example, the Code requires licensees to disclose to the university a complete listing of sites which have any role in the manufacturing process, from primary contractor factories or assembling centres down through all layers of the subcontracting system, whether international or domestic.

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