

The Canadian Federation of Students' main demands at the march included:

- freezing tuition at current rates
- an increase in funding to universities to ensure the freeze is sustainable an increase in funding to social programs
- changing merit-based scholarships (like the Millennium fund) into need-based grants addressing bankruptcy legislation for students
- an end to mandatory credit checks for student loan applicants

Protesting student debt

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rally. Students carrying placards reading "Education shouldn't be a debt sentence" walked from the quad down to the provincial legislature. The group filled the streets, waving signs, blowing trumpets, and chanting into loud speakers.

The CFS averages student debt at graduation as somewhere around the \$25,000 mark, and given that, the passion within the crowd wasn't surprising.

Chanting, "this is where we begin, we will fight until we win", the students attempted to get their messages heard by ending their march with a series of speeches on the legislature's front stairs.

Mona Kamal participated in the march. She is among many who disagree with government cutbacks. Her final debt, over her seven years of study, will be \$30,000.

"I am very glad I got an education [but] I think being in debt is a horrible way to start out my life," she said.

But Kamal doesn't see this march doing as much as McCall Howard claims.

"If you want to change something, you have to do something stronger than this," Kamal said.

Hoops Harrison, the chairman

of CASA, agrees. He believes his organization practices the "something stronger" Kamal is looking for.

"CASA believes in change by any means necessary, but not by any means," he said.

Harrison says CASA would rather focus on lobbying than protests. And he cites an upcoming CASA meeting with four cabinet ministers as a better method for forcing change.

As can be expected, the CFS' McCall Howard disagrees. She says CASA's lobbying doesn't involve mass student participation.

But regardless of membership in either CFS or CASA, McCall Howard says government cutbacks will not solve themselves.

Back at the march, Peter McCarron, a student at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design was making his own statement about government cutbacks. He had designed, and was wearing, a papier maché politician. The doll rested on McCarron's shoulders and towered above him. It was an artistic protest against government's tendency to cut funding to arts education.

Not wanting to see his school deteriorate, McCarron says visible pressure is essential.

"People can't get stuffed into drawers like letters and proposals can."

Screening 'bigoted'

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questionnaires.

But Murray, who had the same job with the Red Cross before the CBS takeover, says the screening isn't nice but it's necessary.

"Put yourself in the hospital bed. What would make you feel more comfortable — knowing that blood services did everything... to ensure a safe product or transfusion, or [if blood services] just let everybody give blood and hope it's safe?"

The following five questions are among questions asked by Canadian Blood Services when someone wishes to donate blood.

14. Have you taken illegal drugs or illegal steroids with a needle even one time?

16. Male donors: Have you had sex with a man, even one time since 1977?

21. At any time in the last 12 months, have you paid money or drugs for sex?

26. In the past 12 months, have you had sex with someone whose sexual background you don't know?

27. Were you born in or have you lived in any of the following countries since 1977: Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Niger or Nigeria?

New lobbying group bands NS universities together

BY ANDREW SIMPSON

Dalhousie is a member of a new Nova Scotia student advocacy group representing over 30,000 of the province's students.

The Nova Scotia Student Advocacy Coalition (NSSAC) was formed by eight of the province's 11 universities and was designed to fill the void created when the Student Union of Nova Scotia (SUNS) dissolved last year.

"With the demise of SUNS, students in Nova Scotia did not have an effective means for lobbying the government," said Tayo Ajayi, chair of NSSAC and student union president at the University College of Cape Breton.

"We need a strong provincial organization to represent and promote the common interests of students in Nova Scotia," he said.

Ajayi says a united lobbying effort gives student interests a stronger platform from which to affect government policy.

"You must be united on whatever you want to lobby for... you become much more effective that way, much more focussed."

The NSSAC will be a bare-bones operation. Membership dues are \$200 per student union and, apart from Ajayi, there will be no staff.

Mount Saint Vincent Student Union president Sheldon Miller says the differences between NSSAC and SUNS are what will ensure the new coalition's success.

"SUNS spent too much time talking about [internal] policies and not enough time talking about lobbying initiatives," he said.

"NSSAC has a much looser structure, it will be dedicated... to lobbying and advocacy efforts."

NSSAC will also be strictly consensus-driven. It will only lobby

on an issue when the desired objective, and approach, are common to all the member student unions — something Miller says is important.

"The consensus model is the best," he said. "We agreed early on that we wouldn't proceed with any initiative that would be harmful to any member school or that any member school would disagree with."

SUNS was also hampered by debate between student unions belonging to one or other of the two national student organizations — the Canadian Federations of Students (CFS) and the Canadian Alliance of Students' Associations (CASA).

But Acadia Student Union president Chris Houston says the goal with NSSAC is to avoid the CFS-CASA dichotomy.

"Nova Scotia is split with CASA and CFS, so obviously there's a lot of different political viewpoints and philosophies on how student advocacy should be

done," he said.

"What we did is create the structure where we only tackle issues that we all have common ground on."

Houston, Miller and Ajayi all say they don't expect political differences to handcuff the coalition.

"There are enough common issues that we can lobby on to improve the situation for students across the province," said Miller, whose Mount Saint Vincent Student Union belongs to CFS.

"[And] tuition is something common that has to be addressed."

But Acadia's Houston says tuition is one of the contentious issues that likely won't be addressed.

Acadia belongs to CASA.

"[NSSAC] won't really do a lot on tuition because CFS schools are really pushing for a tuition freeze, or zero tuition, whereas the CASA schools, and even some of the [independent] schools, may not believe in that."

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THE GAZETTE rm 312, SUB

CORRECTION

In a recent article entitled "Take Back the Night 'about power'", the Gazette incorrectly reported that "Jacqui Brown from the Avalon Centre for Sexual Assault" spoke at the Take Back the Night rally.

In fact, Jackie Steves from the Avalon Sexual Assault Centre spoke at the rally.

The Gazette apologizes for any inconvenience this error may have caused.



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