

Money denied...

Loan limits: more red tape?

by Jeff Harrington

HALIFAX (CUP) - Forty Canadian university students have been denied loans this fall because of little-known limits on students aid.

Under amendments introduced by the federal government last fall, students are now limited to \$20,000 for undergraduate programs, \$30,000 for masters programs and \$40,000 for doctoral programs. The previous limit for

all students was 520 weeks of funding at a maximum of \$105 a week, for a total of \$54,600.

The new rules on maximum loans are aimed at students who "show no real commitment to finishing their studies," said Rick Woyiwada, director of policy for the Canadian Student Loan program.

Under the policy, each province sends the federal government the

names of students whose loans it will not process. The students are given a chance to appeal if further funding is denied.

But critics say the Secretary of State, the federal department that administers student assistance, already has too much on its plate to deal fairly with students who reach the limit.

Jeff Phelps, chair of the Students Union of Nova Scotia, said provincial student assistance bodies are more in tune with the needs of students.

"The Secretary of State is a mess, a shambles," said Phelps. "It's a big department that shouldn't have to deal with this."

The department is also "very condescending to students," according to Jane Arnold, chair of the Canadian Federation of Students (CFS).

"The process is really arbitrary. Students are adults. They should get the same customer service as they would get if they wanted a loan for a new car," she said.

Provinces send the federal government each student's year, program of study, a list of previous courses the student has taken and whether or not the courses were completed.

Woyiwada said cases are treated on a "case-by-case" basis and students who genuinely need more money will not be denied funding.

Wayne Doggett, who chairs a committee that advises Nova Scotia's education minister on student aid, is concerned about the "discretionary nature of applying the policy."

"How would you like to have someone judge whether or not you've jumped around from institution to institution? You may have very good reasons," he said.

Doggett said the advisory committee, which has received no written guidelines on the policy, is also concerned about the effects limits will have on low-income students "at a time when costs are escalating."

In Nova Scotia, 14 students have been refused further funding this year.

One student, who has received a letter warning she will reach her limit next year, said she is one of

plans in jeopardy, doesn't it?" he said.

But Kathleen Inkpen, Nova Scotia's director of student aid, said students in good standing who need to borrow beyond their limit should have no trouble getting extra money.

"(The policy is for those) who do one year of commerce, one year of arts, one year of science, then go to hairdressing school for a year," she said.

CUP Briefs

Reactor unsafe

SASKATOON (CUP) - The University of Saskatchewan should squash plans to buy a controversial ten-megawatt nuclear reactor, according to a local citizen's coalition.

Using a recent report critical of a two-megawatt nuclear reactor in Pinawa, Manitoba, the Pokebusters Citizens Coalition has intensified its campaign to stop the U of S from buying the reactor.

The Atomic Energy Control Board (AECB) has said Pinawa's two-megawatt reactor is unsafe because of improper waste management, inadequate testing procedures, and a general lack of quality assurance in the design.

Pokebusters official Tom Eremondi said if the two-megawatt reactor can't operate safely neither can the larger one being considered by U of S.

"The U of S board of governors should reject the Slowpoke outright," Eremondi said. "The Atomic Energy Control Board's document is enough proof."

"Hidden dangers within the Slowpoke reactor would pose unnecessary risks to thousands of university students and the surrounding community," he said.

But Metro Dmytriw of Atomic Energy of Canada Limited said those who are afraid of the reactor "don't understand the technology."

When asked about the safety concerns, Dmytriw said an environmental impact assessment would be conducted under the provincial and federal government guidelines.

The university board of governors is expected to make a decision on the issue by November.

Docs fear HIV

by Greg Sewell

TORONTO (CUP) - Fear of infection, misinformation about transmission, and negative attitudes towards lesbians and gays are leading medical students to be weary of treating HIV-positive patients, says a recent study.

At the University of Toronto, 548 medical students were polled about their attitudes and knowledge of AIDS and HIV infection.

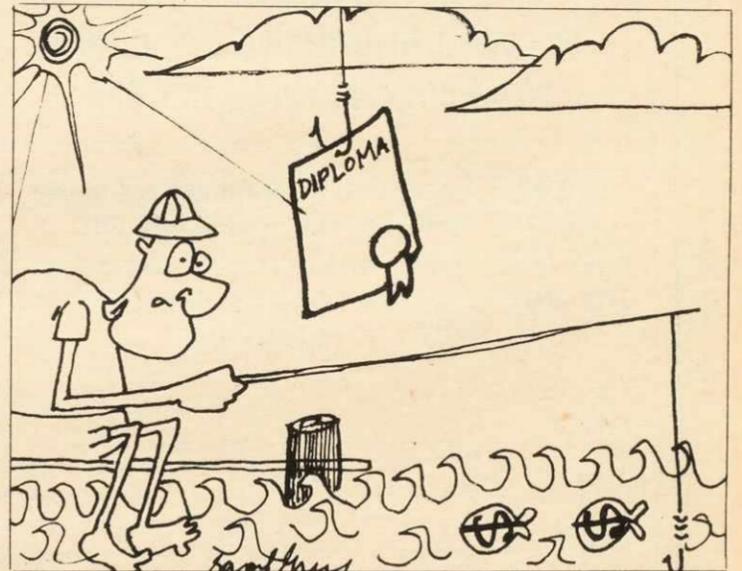
The poll discovered that half of them believe they should have the right to refuse to treat those infected with HIV, and 25 per cent feel the risk of infection interferes with the treatment of AIDS or HIV patients.

Seventy per cent said they have negative attitudes towards lesbians and gays. And one in six would not want their children in a room with a HIV-positive person.

According to Dr. Michael Hulton, co-chair of the HIV Primary Physicians Care Group, the results of the study mirror the level of information in the general public.

However, Hulton was angry over what he sees as a decrease in the sense of responsibility felt by doctors to treat everyone.

"Tell the silly buggers that a generation ago it was their duty to treat everyone. There's no precedent in the medical profession of running away from treating patients because of danger to themselves. You did not refuse your infectious patients," he said.



an increasing number of students who are pursuing two undergraduate degrees rather than a masters program or doctorate.

The student, who asked to remain anonymous, said she may choose not to finish her second degree if she can get a job without it, rather than deal with the Secretary of State's red tape.

"Why put myself through the stress?" she said.

Doggett said the uncertainty the policy will cause students is worrisome.

"If you're considering going into a program and you get one of these letters, it kind of throws your

Inkpen said the warning letters are being sent out because "nobody reads the instructions" in the province's student aid handbook.

According to CFS chair Arnold, the new student loan limit is not the only issue students know little about.

"How many students know the GST will be placed on their textbooks, how many know the government is placing a three per cent tax on loans? In Nova Scotia, how many students know they're paying the highest education in Canada?"

"They just don't know," Arnold said.

Four students disciplined

by Patchen Barss

WOLFVILLE, N.S. (CUP) - Acadia University has slapped sanctions on the four men responsible for hanging a homophobic banner outside a campus residence last March.

The banner, declaring a floor of the residence to be "fag free," appeared a day after Acadia's student newspaper, The Athenaeum, published an eight-page gay and lesbian supplement.

At the time, the floor's residence assistant said "(the banner) resulted from our general anger at reading the Athenaeum last night."

The residence assistant later resigned from his job and is no longer allowed to live on campus. Both

he and the three other students are on disciplinary probation. None have been identified.

In a letter to the university community last week, Acadia President J.R.C. Perkin called the banner "deeply offensive to many members of the community." Perkin said he fully supports the sanctions and hopes students "have all gained new insights and sensitivities as a result of the incident."

The university's sexual assault harassment committee also released a statement, saying the "baggage" or prejudices many people bring to university make the elimination of sexual harassment "a tremendous challenge."

"This incident, which may have been more thoughtless (although

no less culpable) than malicious, indicated that Acadia is no more immune to demonstrations of intolerance than other parts of society," the committee said.

Acadia student council president Steve Machat said he too supports the sanctions but hopes that if such incidents recur, "they'll get a little tougher."

Machat said the controversy forced both the university and the students' union to "enter new territory."

The student council is now discussing the formation of a student rights committee, which would have a mandate to act on behalf of students who are persecuted or discriminated against.