

# Privatization and Post-Secondary Education

## Education: right or privilege? Part 2 of 8

by Dave Courtney

Recent tuition hikes and cutbacks in government funding are forcing students to reconsider a university education. Is post-secondary education in Nova Scotia a practical social opportunity or a restricted financial privilege?

As the political attitude toward funding of post-secondary education becomes more ruthless, students suffer. A 1987 report by the Senate Committee on National Finance suggested the federal government "should not be disposed to advance policies or programs that are designed to encourage greater numbers of students to attend universities or colleges of Canada."

The federal government has taken this suggestion to heart, cutting \$1.6 billion from post-secondary education funding through Bill C-96. While the Conservative party may claim

substantial increases in funding for education, these increases have not kept pace with the rising cost of running a university in terms of books, faculty payroll, libraries and other facilities.

"Students are in effect being asked to pay more for a declining standard," says Bob Kanduth, an official with the Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations. "There is a real irony there."

As part of the government's ongoing drive to cut costs at the expense of the politically powerless, Employment and Immigration Canada has cut at least 44 per cent from the 1990 federal summer job program, leaving even more students to compete for fewer jobs throughout Canada.

"Lots of students depend on summer jobs to afford college or university," says NDP education critic Chris Axworthy. "What they're doing is robbing more

Canadians of their right to an education."

Dalhousie University President Howard Clark, in an article in the *Dalhousie News* states that "the relationship between student aid, student debt, family support, tuition fees and other sources of income and accessibility are clearly very complex, not well understood by any of us, and not well supported in terms of available statistical data and analysis."

Students, however, do not need statistical data and analysis to understand the status of their own bank accounts. With a national average increase of 6.4 per cent, tuition fees represent only part of an ever-increasing financial burden.

While Dr. Clark focuses on tuition fees as a source of financial contention between students and administration, he forgets minor details such as food, clothing, transportation, books, and living expenses.

In the words of one student, "It's hard enough finding a decent place to live in Halifax; every year means another lunge into debt and I have absolutely no guarantee of a job when I am finished up."

While Dr. Clark maintains Dalhousie students pay the cheapest tuition fees in Nova Scotia, this observation is rendered inane in light of Atlantic Canada's unemployment rate. Already

the highest in the country, the Atlantic jobless rate continues to rise, recording a 7.8 per cent increase for February 1990.

Professor Michael Bradfield, a faculty member at Dalhousie's economics department believes Canada's healthy national economy is more than capable of providing quality education at a price affordable to everyone.

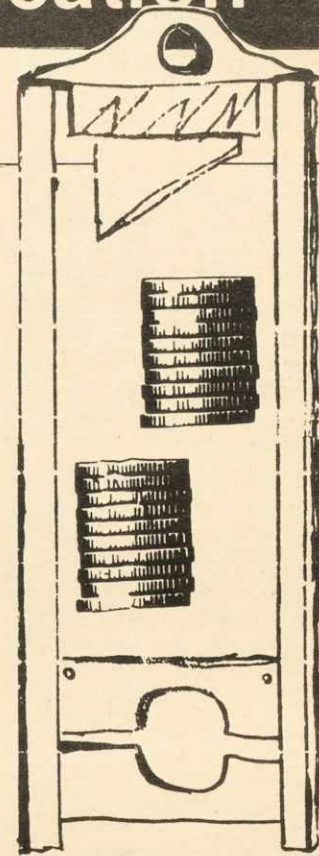
While the Conservatives' cutbacks save money in the short term, Bradfield says, this "extremely short-sighted" exercise in accounting deprives Canada of a vital resource in terms of an educated work sector.

"Reduced government support of post-secondary education is cutting off the fingers and toes of Dalhousie university. Canada does have the resources available to finance post-secondary education if the government will shift its priorities."

Bradfield maintains that Canada will only have unemployment to lose as part of this remedy, providing greater opportunity for teachers while developing Canada's job market to utilize the abilities of graduates.

"If one needs to select a particular group to tax in support of PSE," says Bradfield, "why not impose an education surcharge on those who maintain a high level income?"

"After all, it is this group who benefits the most from the graduate sector. Well-educated



employees form the basis of any successful company. The high level income group have most likely been educated in a government-subsidized university system; post-secondary education will be the final destination for the children of this group."

The government of Canada is demanding that students support their own academic pursuits, leaving taxpayers' money to more 'practical' use. Once privatization has been extended to university funding, other basic social programs such as welfare and medicare are sure to follow.

## Black highlanders?

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feel we should be left out of the picture. . . we have evidence that blacks were involved," he said.

The Citadel says historical accuracy is the reason for the discrimination, but historic discrimination is not pointed out on the tours or in the Citadel's literature. There were black regiments involved in the building of the Citadel, and there were Micma involved with the British arm yet the "animations" do not include these groups.

A spokesperson at the Citadel admitted the hiring policy was inherently discriminatory, but said, "To have it all out in the open would make it clearer why we have this policy."

He said it might be possible to point out the problems to tourists in Citadel tours or literature, but to date nothing has been done along those lines.

"If we included blacks as soldiers in the 78th Highlanders," the spokesperson said, "we would be falsely representing the British military's hiring practices. There were no blacks, as far as I know, in the 78th, and to portray a 78th which did would be a flagrant lie, more of an insult to blacks than

anything. In 1869, the British were racists."

The Citadel did get a dispensation to use discriminatory hiring practices. Any Canadian who feels the dispensation was granted unfairly has the right to complain to the commission, and the dispensation may be revoked after investigation.

## Mandela celebrated

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Joyce Robart of the Black United Front of Nova Scotia. "Blacks in Nova Scotia are not out of prison until they can get jobs and be recognized as human beings."

Similar sentiments were expressed by other speakers, stressing the importance of continuing the fight against racism at home in Nova Scotia.

Mafika Pascoe Ludidi, a member of the African National Congress, and co-chair of the Coalition Against Apartheid, described blacks in South Africa as a "voiceless people."

In exile for 14 years, Ludidi explained he would not be able to return to South Africa, because of the government's "unwillingness

to go the length of freedom."

Ludidi emphasized the importance of increasing economic sanctions on South Africa, saying that while the sanctions hurt, most blacks prefer them to "being shot in the streets" by Apartheid.

In keeping with the theme of celebration, the evening concluded with a performance of the Gumbo dance by Umzabalazo, a South African student dance group. The performers and audience joined to sing "Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika," the African national anthem. The festivities ended with cries of "Freedom in South Africa . . ." and on a more sobering note, "and in Nova Scotia."

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