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Donahoe holds on Royal Commission

Cathy McDonald

The province's long promised Commission of Inquiry into post secondary education is still just that; promised.

Nova Scotia spends more per capita on post secondary education than any other province. But it also spends the least amount of money per student of any province.

Possibly with this imbalance in mind, the Throne speech announced last April 13 that a Commission of Inquiry into post secondary education would be called.

In an interview September 7, Minister of Education Terry Donahoe suggested Commission's mandate would be to look at the "administration and funding of the institutions and duplication of courses (between institutions)". He

also said "In a couple of weeks — maximum — we will have a commission named and in place."

That was two months ago.

Advisor to the Minister on matters concerning post secondary education, Dr. Peter Butler, said in an interview Monday Donahoe is "actively trying to put the thing together." Discussion over the scope and constitution of the commission are now at the cabinet level, he said. Technicalities in locating people to sit on it seem to be holding up the works, Butler said.

The government has announced new policy in the meantime, while still not appointing a Commission of Inquiry. It has made it plain it wants to reduce funding. On August 20 Donahoe announced that \$4.5 million later changed to \$2.1

million, would be cut from university budgets. The government also eliminated one institution without the advice of the Maritime Provinces Higher Education Committee (MPHEC) when it closed the Atlantic Institute of Education.

Butler believed the Commission would be announced before the end of November, and speculated it would be small in size, possibly three or four people.

The Commission might be asked to look at student aid policy, but since a recent study into this already exists, Butler thought it would not be included.

Who, what, when and how are all only the cabinet can answer concerning the Commission of Inquiry into post secondary education.



Feature

U. de M. Occupation: The True Story

by Ken Burke

April 11, 1981 wasn't a normal Easter Sunday for about two hundred Université de Moncton students. On a normal Easter Sunday, they wouldn't have been sleeping inside the main Administration building. They also wouldn't have been awakened at 4:00 in the morning by Moncton city police in full riot gear, herded into the streets, some of them handcuffed, arrested, and taken to the city jail in a transit bus. But this wasn't just any Easter Sunday. This was the eighth day of the Université de Moncton student occupation.

The decision by hundreds of U de M students to occupy their main administration building is going to be looked at as a turning point in Canadian student history. The sheer size of the demonstration and the viciousness of the backlash alone make it a story every Canadian student should know.

But because it occurred at an isolated francophone university in New Brunswick, facts concerning the occupation have been slow trickling down to the rest of us. Over the summer, I spoke to three Université de Moncton students; all leaders in the occupation. Brenda Coté, Steve Alexander, and Rachael Roy will never be the same. Brenda Coté and Rachael Roy were expelled for their roles in the occupation. Steve Alexander is soon to be facing charges for refusing to co-operate with an officer. This is a chronicle of 7 days that changed their lives.

Located in the core of downtown Moncton, New Brunswick, Université de Moncton is a small francophone university in a bilingual province otherwise endowed with English-speaking universities. The look of the campus is decidedly modern, with modern concrete buildings having replaced the old university buildings in most places - with one notable exception.

Dominating the campus is the large brown-brick

Taillon Building, the location of the U de M Administration's offices. Once a convent, the five-storey structure is between 90 and 100 years old; its age shown by an interior of shiny stone floors, high ceilings, and large halls and staircases on every floor. The first floor alone houses a Librairie Acadienne, the campus branch of the National Bank, two cafeterias for the university's 2500-2600 students, and a Boardroom for the Université's board of governors.

Also in the Taillon building is the office of U de M's Rector (Dean), Gilberte Finn.

Gilberte Finn is a highly respected businessman around the Moncton area, and well known in boardrooms across the Province. His spot firmly fixed in the Canadian Establishment, Finn is Chairman of the Board and a chief executive officer of Assomption Mutual Life Insurance Co., as well as chairman of

"The student occupation of the administration building at U de M is a turning point in Canadian history."

four local companies, president of another four, and a director of over thirteen businesses ranging from Brunswick Mining and Smelting Corp. to the George Dumont Hospital. Finn is also a director of the Board of the National Bank of Canada.

With such an impressive list of business accomplishments, being the Rector of Université de Moncton is one of the more colourful feathers in Gilberte Finn's cap. Never a scholar - his education consists of a B.A. and C.L.U. (Chartered Life Underwriter) - Finn brought his business knowledge to the job of Rector. However, this bottom-line business approach had led to student unrest within the University.

Finn had repeatedly been accused by the student federation of failing to support students on any governmental issue. A statement issued by La Fédéra-

tion des Etudiants de l'Université de Moncton (FEUM) after the occupation declares that he "considers all forms of negotiations on a unilateral level". And Rachael Roy, a member of the occupation's negotiating committee, said, "He's a businessman - probably a very good one. But who wants a businessman as a Dean?"

Discontent had been growing within the U de M student community long before April, 1982. Most students at U de M are Acadian, hailing from the economically-depressed francophone areas of New Brunswick. In some places, unemployment runs as high as 30 per cent; and, according to FEUM, the average yearly income in Acadia is \$15,000, lagging far behind other parts of Canada. The situation is worse if you're a student.

Aside from the usual problem of unemployment, U de M students are especially dependent on aid and bursaries to attend university. FEUM places the number of students relying on loans and bursaries at 75 per cent of the total student population. But according to the stringent New Brunswick Student Aid regulations, in order to be eligible for the maximum \$3,500 available in loans and bursaries, a student's parents had to earn less than \$9,000 per year. What concerned students most, however, was not aid, but tuition.

At U de M, tuition had been spiralling upwards steadily over the previous 5 years. Between 1976 and 1981, the cost of tuition had gone up over 85 per cent. The previous year alone had seen a 23 per cent jump in tuition fees.

Finn is on record stating he prefers increases in tuition fees to government underfunding.

For many students, last April seemed like the right time to act, especially in light of projected tuition hikes for 1982-83.

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