

NUS pleased with changes in federal loan plan

Ottawa (CUP) — At least another 100,000 students will be eligible for aid because of the recently proposed changes in the federal student aid program, according to the National Union of Students (NUNS).

Representatives from NUNS reacted favourably to proposed amendments to the Canada Student Loan Act announced January 20 by the Secretary of State. The major changes are:

- the length of a course required to qualify as eligible is changed from 26 weeks to 12

weeks. Currently, students enrolled in courses of less than 26 weeks in duration are not eligible for financial assistance.

- the annual loan limit of \$1800 is now expressed as a weekly limit of \$56.25. This change allows students in courses of more than 32 weeks to receive more than \$1800. Under the present system, the maximum was computed on a semester system and did not take yearly programs into consideration.

Deb Thiel, chairperson of NUS, said students will

benefit a great deal from the changes. "These changes are especially good for vocational students. Vocational programs are not the same duration as university ones and this has now been considered."

NUS has been requesting these changes for the last four years. A press release from the Secretary of State's office acknowledged the organization's role in the changes.

"Mr. Fox underlined that the subject matter of the bill was

discussed with representatives of the National Union of Students."

Despite the positive reaction, NUS executive officer John Doherty did say the organization will continue to lobby the government for further changes in student aid.

"I'm disappointed that no provisions have been made for part time students," said Doherty. "Most of them are women and they need aid as much as, or more so, than full time students."

Doherty also said NUS would like to see students given up to a year after they have found a job before they must repay their loans. Currently, students must begin to repay loans six months after they have graduated.

But, said Doherty, "NUS doesn't want to hold back these proposed changes," by introducing others at this time.

The changes are expected to be implemented by September 1981.

Commission under fire

Vancouver (CUP) — The royal commission on newspapers was hit with a surprisingly bitter barrage of criticism here January 19 as delegations questioned the motives of the government which appointed the commission.

The critics' cynicism is rooted in frustration with the liberal government's decision to ignore the 1970 findings of a special senate committee headed by Keith Davey. His report warned of the kind of media concentration which was completed in a series of corporate manoeuvres August 27, leaving Thomson Newspapers Ltd. and Southam Inc. as the major owners of Canadian daily newspapers.

"The Davey Committee presented a cogent analysis of the newspaper situation," Steve McClure, a staff member of the Ubysey, the University of B.C. student newspaper, told the commission. "We're just trying to figure out why you people are here."

Commission chair Tom Kent replied that if the Davey report "had not been ignored, there would not be a need for this commission. But some new investigation is now necessary."

Southam News columnist Alan Fotheringham told the commission that everything they would be told during hearings had already been forecast by the Davey committee.

"The same party that ignored that report is responsible for Canada having the weakest anti-trust legislation of any industrialized nation," Fotheringham said.

"You'll pardon me if I sniff hypocrisy in the government that has established this commission."

Malaspina College instructor Stan Persky said there was a conflict under the capitalist system between the newspaper's role as a business and a public forum.

"If a business doesn't prosper, then a forum disappears," said Persky. "The end result is that fewer and fewer businessmen own the public forum."

Persky suggested two possible remedies would be the creation of a Canada Council for newspapers or a crown newspaper corporation.

Asked whether a crown newspaper would expropriate existing newspaper holdings, Persky replied in mock surprise: "You can't do that here in Canada! You can't interfere with capitalism. It should be allowed to bumble along as always."

The Vancouver-New Westminster newspaper guild said that both the Southam and Thomson corporations were "ruthless."

Guild spokesperson Jan O'Brien read a long list of the firms' corporate holdings before adding that newspaper owners should divest themselves of other commercial interests.

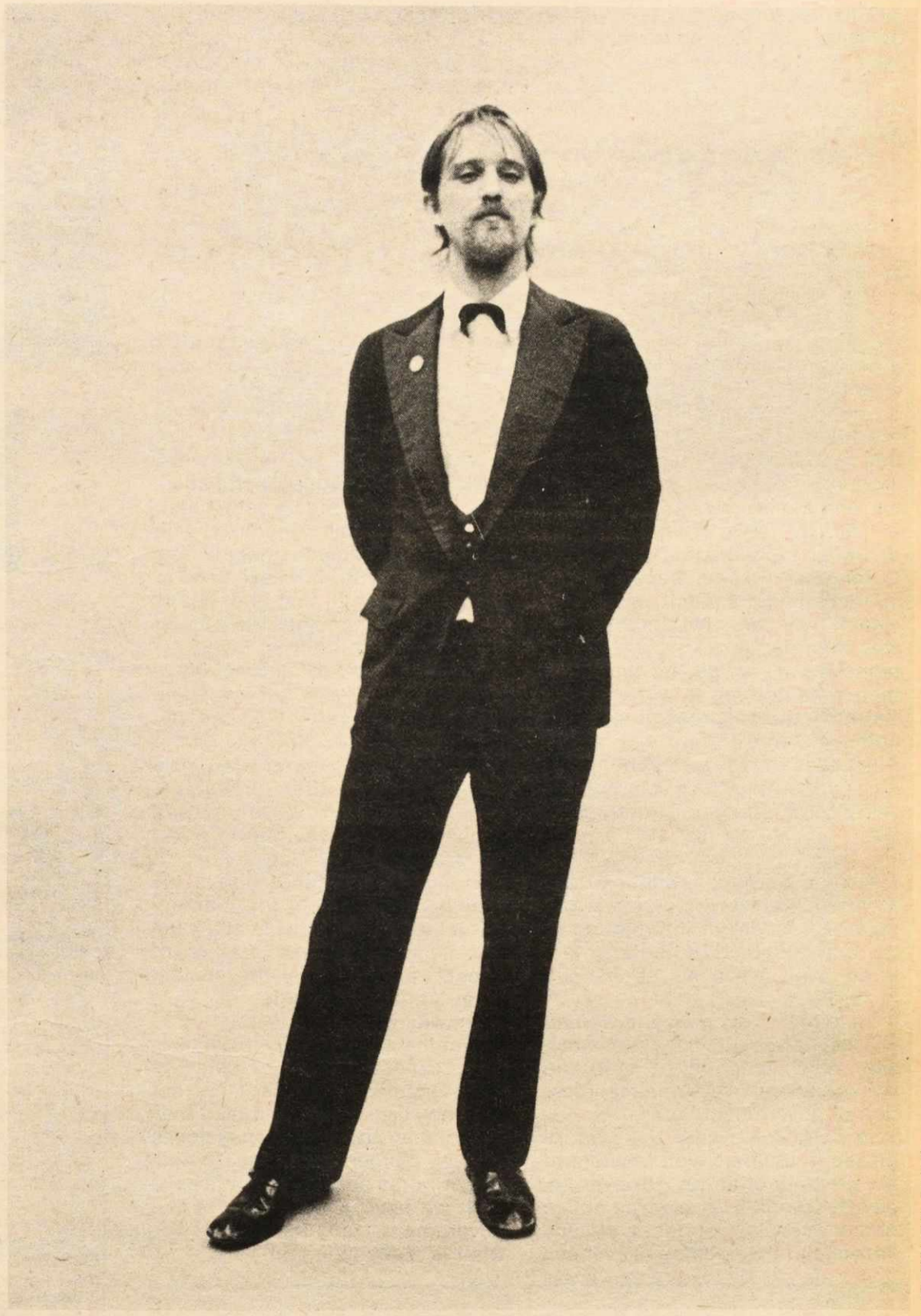
"They should be either newspaper magnates or corporate tycoons," O'Brien said.

"The daily press has a unique power and a unique responsibility. As it now stands, that power and responsibility can be bought, sold, subverted and usurped at the whim of a few corporate giants, whose first interests are shareholders."

The Ubysey's brief, presented by the staff collective, questioned whether the composition of the commission lent itself towards serious remedies for Canada's print media.

"Had the government seen fit to approach the problem in an objective frame of mind, it would have appointed people to the commission from a variety of backgrounds and perspectives," Ubysey staffer Julie Wheelwright told the commission. "Instead the government chose commissioners whose interests could be construed by the public as being too closely identified with the status quo."

"It is our belief that there should exist a free and independent press that is able to maintain as its first priority dissemination of information without domination by advertising or corporate concerns."



Peter Rans, recently reappointed as graduate representative to Dalhousie Student Council, sported a new outfit at Sunday night's council meeting. He explained to members that his return was in part sparked by Commerce rep Bruce McGowan's statements that students ought to take a "three piece suit approach" to lobbying for increased funds for higher education and ought to avoid appearing like militants or radicals. "When I heard about that, I knew it was time to come back", he said. The council meeting was cancelled after quorum failed to be reached.