

Two Atlantic universities freeze tuition

BY SARAH MURPHY

CHARLOTTETOWN (CUP) — Students at two Atlantic universities are smiling after receiving a tuition freeze.

Students at the University of Prince Edward Island (UPEI) won't face any tuition increases for the 2000-2001 academic year.

The decision was announced this past Tuesday at a student union press conference.

On Wednesday, students at the Memorial University of Newfoundland had their own tuition freeze extended for a third year.

In February 1999, the Newfoundland government announced a two-year freeze on tuition. This has now been extended to the 2001-002 school year.

Officials from UPEI, meanwhile, were cheering their own tuition freeze.

Dr. Regis Duffy, chair of the UPEI Board of Governors, said he was pleased to be able to keep tuition fees for students at the current level. The average undergraduate arts student at the university pays \$3,480 a year in tuition.

"We appreciate this material

signal of support for post-secondary education in the province," said Duffy.

UPEI President Wade MacLauchlan added that the freeze was the first step in a three-year plan to restore investment in higher education.

"We are pleased that our students will be the beneficiaries of prudent management and increased level of public support for the university," said the president.

After numerous years of decreased funding and an average rise in tuition of 7.7 percent per year

over the last 22 years, the UPEI Student Union applauds the funding decisions.

"We would have to say no one was disappointed," said John Desrosiers, student union president. "The [provincial] budget and the government commitment to increase funding to UPEI's operating budget over the next three years, placed the university in a great position."

The tuition freeze at UPEI follows several recent announcements by the province, including:

\$1 million towards a new Student Centre project on campus, an extension of debt relief and \$600 bursaries for third and fourth-year UPEI students from the island.

According to figures from the Canadian Federation of Students, undergraduate arts students at Memorial pay \$3,300 in tuition.

In Nova Scotia, students pay \$4,113 on average, while the average tuition in New Brunswick is \$3,329.

(With files from Amanda Labonté)

Poor hardest hit by environmental collapse, says conference

BY HAMISH COPLEY

MONTREAL (CUP) — The world's environment is worsening and the biggest losers are poor countries, said delegates at a recent conference of activists from across the Americas.

The three-day gathering, held at the Université de Montréal, discussed links between injustice, ecological collapse and the global economy.

Delegates from North and South America focused on the effect of environmental damage on the poor and the powerless.

"There's no water left to drink in El Salvador," said Rosendo Mauricio Sermeño, an environmental activist from Central America. "Sometimes you get earthworms out of the tap. The [logging] companies call this drinkable water."

Mauricio said logging in El Salvador has destroyed the country's water table and polluted its rivers and lakes.

"A large part of the territory can no longer support life," he said.

Mauricio added that between the country's environmental collapse and its civil war, one-fifth of

El Salvador's population has left the country in the span of a few years.

He said native populations, who are the poorest segment of society, are the hardest hit.

Marie Mazalto, from environmental activist group Eau-Secours, said the first world has no reason to feel safe about its supply of drinking water.

She said many countries have sold off their water supply system to private companies, causing the price to rise.

"The repercussions have been shocking in Great Britain," Mazalto said, "where running water has become expensive for the poor." She added that in one region in France the price of water tripled after privatization.

Lucia Antonio Montero, a Native activist from southern Mexico, said large corporations, with the help of the Mexican government, are now pushing native farmers off their land and cutting down the region's forests.

"The government has privatized land that belonged to the community," she said. "[The new owners] plant eucalyptus trees, which destroy the soil."

Montero described the situation as a "debauchery."

"It's a question of life or death," she said. "The destruction of our forests and rivers matter to all our peoples. [Canada and the U.S.] invests the most money into these companies."

For those who want to change corporate policies, Toronto activist François Meloche suggested making a small investment in the corporation doing the damage.

"For three dollars, I become a shareholder," he said. "Then I can present the point of view of [protesters]."

Meloche is one of the activists fighting to get Talisman, a Calgary-based oil company, out of the Sudan. A recent Canadian government report said Talisman's drilling interests in the African country are helping fuel Sudan's civil war.

Meloche said activists should invest in companies that are environmentally and socially conscious, to encourage other companies to do the same.

"It is possible to buy 'ethical funds' at a Caisse Desjardins," he said. "Anyone can buy these at any bank, for \$20 a share."

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