

# Liberals pressure PM to shape up on student front

BY MEG MURPHY

OTTAWA (CUP) — In a move to ensure greater accessibility to universities for cash-strapped students, delegates at the recent Liberal convention in Ottawa passed a resolution calling for a national system of grants.

Delegates demanded additional funds for the Canada Student Loan Program, the introduction of debt relief according to salary and the establishment of an appropriate ceiling on the level of individual student debt.

They also requested the launch of a publicity campaign to encourage the pursuit of higher education and an income-contingency loan repayment program.

The Liberal party convention took place Mar. 20-22.

According to Richard Gorham, New Brunswick's representative for the Liberal party's standing policy committee, the resolution amalgamated concerns expressed by several provinces into one comprehensive package.

"We are very concerned that students come out of their education with increasing debt. The government should do something with helping them cope with the problem," he said.

It was the insistence on a national system of grants which caught NDP member of Parliament Libby Davies' attention, prompting her to question the Liberal party resolution and demanding that action be taken on it.

"I think the resolution is just another indication of the increasing pressure that is continuing to build," Davies said in an interview.

"The Liberals, despite all their claims and rhetoric about this being a student's budget, have not lived up to their promises," she said, pointing out that by the year 2000 the Chretien government will have cut \$3.1-billion in post-secondary education funding.

The new Millennium scholarship fund, introduced in the Liberal's latest budget, reinvests \$2.5-billion into student aid over 10 years, beginning at the start of the next century.

She says with debt loads averaging \$25,000 for many graduates and desperate bankruptcy declarations becoming more commonplace, the fund does not cut it.

"The federal government has completely gutted its funding of post-secondary education," Davies said, adding the federal scholarship fund is a token gesture since it helps only 100,000 students a year, which is seven per cent of the higher-education population.

"It is a classic Liberal strategy that you give people a little bit and pacify them and then you turn off the tap," she said, pointing to changes in student bankruptcy legislation as indicative of the federal government's true attitude.

The new legislation extends the period during which a person is not allowed to discharge a student loan through bankruptcy

after leaving the education system — from the current two years to 10.

"I think that is an incredibly cynical move, that they are planning to change the bankruptcy legislation. If they are so convinced their budget is good for students, why are they

anticipating unpayable student debt and already protecting the bankers' interests?" she asked.

Human Resources minister Pierre Pettigrew, answering on behalf of the Prime Minister, responded to Davies' criticism.

"The budget has been very, very well received because

education and access to knowledge, competence and skills are at the heart of it," he said, pointing to the Millennium scholarship fund as a grant system, while saying that the Canada Student Loan Program is being improved.

"This is the best achievement

we have done," he said.

But Davies says the "student-focused" budget was more about image than sincere aid.

"The Millennium fund is really more about dealing with Chretien's legacy in the year 2000 and it fails miserably to address the real problems," she said.

## Memorial faculty want board seats

BY SEAN RYAN

ST. JOHN'S (CUP) — A group of faculty at Memorial University have joined forces with students in a fight for representation on the university's highest governing body.

The Committee of Concerned Faculty (CCF) forwarded a proposal to university president Art May that called for more faculty, staff and student representatives on the university's Board of Regents, the equivalent to Dalhousie's Board of Governors.

In a letter to May, CCF chair Robert Adamec clarifies CCF's arguments.

"Be assured that we are not proposing establishment of voting blocks of special interest on the Board...it is imperative that the viewpoint of all sectors be represented," the letter states.

"We're not overly interested in totally turning the governance upside down," Adamec said. "But we are interested in making sure that it has a stronger understanding of the functioning of the university."

Adamec says faculty representation on the board is necessary, and that the 29 universities across Canada that do have faculty representation on their governing bodies prove it.

But May says Memorial should not make decisions based on what is happening elsewhere.

"Copycatting is not my favourite approach to university governance," he said. "Maybe the way we do it is the best way."

Dalhousie has three faculty positions on its Board of Governors.

May said he doesn't have any problem in principle with faculty members being on the board, but

he compared the board to a cabinet — as opposed to a parliament.

"[The board] is not a collection of constituencies," he said.

He added certain principles, such as cabinet solidarity and privacy, apply and that he doesn't expect the nature or composition of the board to change anytime soon.

"People who are appointed to the board are appointed in their personal capacities the same way that people are on the board of General Motors or Fishery Products," he said. "They are not appointed to represent constituencies — they are appointed as persons to govern the institution."

"That is a very important distinction and I'm not sure that people fully understand that."

Adamec disagrees. He says a cabinet is comprised

of elected members, who represent constituencies, whereas most board members are business-people.

"If he doesn't feel that it's a representative body, why does he allow students on the Board?" Adamec asked. "His logic is not consistent."

"The reasons why the students are on there are the same reasons why we want to have faculty [on the board]."

Adamec says the faculty want board representation because they have concerns about the way Memorial is run.

"There is a strong faculty feeling that we fundamentally disagree with Dr. May as to how this place should be governed."

CCF is also calling for separate graduate student representation on the board.

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CALGARY	—	—	18:50	—	—	—	—
TORONTO	16:10 <sup>11</sup>	14:35 <sup>1</sup> 18:25	10:30 <sup>1</sup> 14:30 <sup>11</sup>	15:40 <sup>11</sup> 22:55 <sup>9</sup>	14:20 <sup>10</sup> 17:20	11:35	—
ST. JOHN'S	—	13:25	—	18:00	—	—	—

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