

## Stand is no stand

OTTAWA (CUP) — Many student councils at universities across Canada are avoiding taking a stand on the Persian Gulf war, preferring to leave the issue up to students.

"The only stand we've taken is not to take a stand," said Mark Arsenault, an executive with the student council of Mt. Allison University in Sackville, N.B. "We've decided (the Persian Gulf crisis) is a personal issue."

Student council was split on the issue, he said, but sponsored two "controversial" debates on Canada's role in the Gulf.

The University of British Columbia "hasn't adopted an official stance" on the issue yet, but a motion opposing Canada's involvement in the war will be brought before councillors Jan. 31, said Kurt Preinsperg, president of UBC's Alma Mater Society.

On the other coast, the student council at Memorial University of Newfoundland hasn't made a decision on the issue either, said council president Wade Brake, who wouldn't comment further.

But the student council at Acadia University in Wolfville, N.S. bucked the trend by passing a motion Jan. 13 opposing Canada's involvement in the war.

Acadia's student council has also written a letter to Prime Minister Brian Mulroney voicing its opposition to Canada's involvement, said council president Steve Machat.

"Our generation has always been condemned for our apathy," Machat said. "This resolution [provoked] a lot of discussion."

## Spicer squads

TORONTO (CUP) — Keith Spicer is sending out "commandos for dialogue" to get students talking, but his guerrillas are firing blanks.

The chair of the Citizen's Forum on Canada's Future, or the Spicer commission, as it is more popularly known, says he is trying to get Canadian students talking about the state of the nation. The commission is trying to get student newspapers to publish an article, for free, talking about their role in nation-building.

"I know what students can accomplish — their ideals and drive — and, yes, even their 'innocence' — are powerful antidotes for the tired cynicism which clogs the brains cells (sic) of every establishment," Spicer says in the article.

However, students' brains seem to be just as clogged as those of the so-called establishment. Ontario Federation of Students chair Tim Jackson, a usually affable man, is not only cynical, he's downright hostile.

"I think [the article] is extremely paternalistic," he said. "I think he's way off base. The whole thing stinks of Mulroney and stinks of the Tory agenda."

Jackson said the absence of students from the 12-member commission indicates just how interested the government is in student concerns. And, he added, it's unlikely that the federal government will listen to what people have to say.

## Race rights

VANCOUVER (CUP) — Despite concerns expressed by some members, the University of British Columbia Senate passed a race relations policy Jan. 23.

UBC "is committed to ensuring that all members of the university community — students, faculty, staff and visitors — are able to study and work in an environment of tolerance and mutual respect that is free from harassment and discrimination," the policy says.

A second statement, that "the University may initiate appropriate action against individuals or groups whose behavior amounts to discrimination or harassment or whose behavior threatens that environment of mutual respect and tolerance," was also passed out by the Senate.

Before voting, assistant law professor Philip Bryden warned that there was a potential for conflict between the harassment and discrimination policy and the university's stand on academic freedom.

"Most US universities that have introduced such a policy have immediately found a conflict between the broad notion of academic freedom and that of harassment and discrimination," he said. "I think the issue is to resolve this type of conflict."

In an interview after the meeting, Bryden gave the example of a student at the University of Michigan who stood up in a class and said that homosexuality is a disease and can be treated.

While many gays may say the student is being discriminatory, others may think the student is expressing an academic point of view, Bryden said.

## Stomping out injustice

by Marie-France LeBlanc

The Women's Legal Education and Action Fund Foundation has set its sights on Nova Scotia. Last Wednesday John Tory, the National Campaign's co-chair, came to Halifax to formally launch LEAF's eastern campaign. Joining Mr. Tory in outlining LEAF's mission and goals, were: Dr. Ruth Goldbloom, Nova Scotia's LEAF representative, and Elizabeth Cusack Walsh, a Nova Scotia Lawyer who is a national member of the organisation.

The LEAF Foundation has been established to raise a 5 million dollar National Endowment Fund. This fund will serve to support the Women's Legal Education and Action Fund Foundation in its efforts to carry out its mandate of "equality for the women of Canada". It hopes to dispel sexual inequality in society especially as

it pertains to issues of: power disparity, disparities of access to economic opportunity, disparities of exposure to poverty, and disparities of vulnerability.

The Foundation is made up of volunteers, mostly having some ties to the legal community, who will solicit funds from the private, corporate and professional sectors, to compliment those already provided by the government. Peggy McInnis, a Halifax lawyer who volunteers for the organisation, says she is quite confident of LEAF's success in Nova Scotia. She says that the Foundation "has set a realistic target" and she feels the community can meet it.

The Nova Scotia chapter of LEAF has also been established in order to raise awareness of, and to educate the people of the province of its issues. At this point in time this is one of the Foundations main roles in the province, since as of

yet no Nova Scotia cases have been undertaken, although some are planned for the near future. The Foundation is quick to point out, though, that all cases are universal and the outcomes influence all women in Canada. For example, the organisation had a strong influence in the closing of the women's prison in Ontario due to its fight for the rights of women in prison. This in turn directly effects all women prisoners in Canada.

As well, LEAF was involved in the Mount Cashel Orphanage being brought up on charges. The enquiry set up to investigate the allegations of child abuse received a presentation on sexual and domestic abuse from LEAF. Thus it appears the Women's Legal Education and Action Fund Foundation is a registered charity dedicated to stomping out discrimination and injustice on all levels, even if its main focus is women.

## Getting the run around

## Quebec native students excluded

by Heidi Modro

MONTREAL (CUP) — When Robert Berube finished grade school at age 13, he and a dozen of his friends were bussed from their small northern Quebec native reserve to the nearest high school.

But two years later, the 30-kilometre daily trips came to an end.

"I dropped out," Berube said. "I hated it: I hated the travelling, I hated the school, the teachers and the students. Everything. I never felt right being there."

Berube was one of thousands of Quebec native students who drop out of the province's high schools every year.

Native leaders point to the alarming 85 per cent high school drop-out rate in some native communities as proof that the school system which is largely controlled by non-natives does not suit their needs.

On average, two thirds of Quebec native students leave high school before graduating, according to the First Nations Education Council. The Quebec Ministry of Education reports that only 19 per cent of the non-native population drops-out before getting their diploma.

Only one in 12 Native students in Quebec will get to the post-secondary level, while 25 per cent of non-native students will be able to go on to university.

Native leaders say many forces within the education system — such as underfunding and institutionalized racism — are at the root of the crisis.

"It's a system built for whites," said Lise Bastien, president for the First Nations Education Council.

"The curriculum, the teaching materials, all ignore the history of the first nations, their values, and their specific needs."

Bastien said a restructuring of the education system would also have to educate non-natives about aboriginal issues.

Children will very often leave the grade school on their reserve well-prepared and full of confidence. But once they enters a non-native school, they'll go through a kind of culture shock, she said.

"It's the other students and even the teachers who will make that child ill at ease because they don't always understand that they must deal differently with someone who has a different cultural background and whose first language is often not French," she said.

It would help, she said, if course curriculum would put more emphasis on teaching about the history of Canada's native people.

"People end up knowing more about South-American Indians than about Canadian Indians," she said. "It doesn't make sense that many Canadians live close to a reserve without knowing what band lives there."

But fighting against the high drop-out rate requires not only taking on the education system.

Konrad Sioui, Quebec regional chief of the Assembly of First Nations, said poverty within native communities is the still the biggest problem in the battle against high drop-out rates.

"Natives quite simply lack the material means to fight the racism and segregation that exists in schools," Sioui said.

Native children who leave their reserve to go to high school only

get \$12 a month in allowance and \$150 a year bursary from the provincial government to buy supplies such as books.

Parents are expected to also contribute to a child's education, but if they're poor the children quickly fall on hard times.

"You can be sure that if a native student goes to school wearing an old dirty pair of pants and a pair running-shoes with holes, s/he will automatically be excluded by the other students," he said.

"Native kids are ten times more sensitive to being excluded by other students because they're not living in their communities where they would normally feel more secure."

But native communities that run every aspect of their high school will have a greater success rate, said Gilbert Whiteduck, director of Education Services for the Maniwaki reserve.

In 1980 the reserve opened the doors to its native-run high school and has seen the number of graduates increase yearly.

"We've come a long way in the last ten years," said Whiteduck. "We now do everything ourselves at our high school. We design our course curriculum, do our administration work and hire our own teachers."

Although the school is constantly adapting to the needs of its population with special basic literacy courses and career counselling sessions, one out of every three students still drops out before graduating.

"Our students only spend 14 per cent of their time in school," he said.