

Province's changes harm

Student Accounts at Dalhousie says students waiting to receive bursaries "are not being charged interest". However, no one will receive marks until their tuition is settled, and with Spring Convocation soon approaching, some graduating students are wondering if they will get to participate in the ceremony.

In spite of this, Dalhousie students are lucky in comparison with students at other universities. Some universities are charging fines for overdue tuition, fines for which the provincial government will take no responsibility. And as the bursary is further delayed, the interest due continues to rise. You can't win.

When questioned on the delayed bursaries in the House of Assembly, Education Minister Terence Donahoe assured students all notifications of bursaries will be mailed out by the end of March - almost three months

overdue. It appears that with regard to student bursaries the provincial government's policy is "Better late than never."

Debate hasn't ended there on the bursary issue, however.

On March fourth, Sandy Cameron presented a motion to the House asking the Buchanan government to restore the bursary program to its 81/82 level and send temporary staff to the Student Aid offices to complete the remaining applications. The motion was tabled for further discussion.

Donahoe, while debating the motion, spent more time analyzing the financial aspects of the bursary program than discussing the effect the changes were having on students.

If the same guidelines were used for bursaries as student loans this would add "many millions of dollars in costs to the province of Nova Scotia," said Donahoe in defending the changes in bursary criteria.

"The monies we are talking about in the

Nova Scotia Bursary Program are non-recoverable monies," continued Donahoe. "There is no return realized by the general taxpaying base."

Contrary to this, Peter Kavanagh believes there is a considerable return from post-secondary education. He feels the issue of bursaries rests on the much larger question of "Who benefits from post-secondary education?"

"It (the change in policy) rests on the assumption that the prime beneficiary of post-secondary education is the student," said Kavanagh urgently.

Denying this assumption, Kavanagh argues "It is good for a democracy if the citizenry are better educated. The benefits of post-secondary education are not solely those of the student."

Kavanagh feels by decreasing bursaries, the government is in fact limiting the accessibility of university.

"That a university or college education be restricted to the rich is something we rejected in 1962 when we created the Canada Student Loan program," asserted Kavanagh. He views the recent changes to the bursary program "as a complete shift in policy."

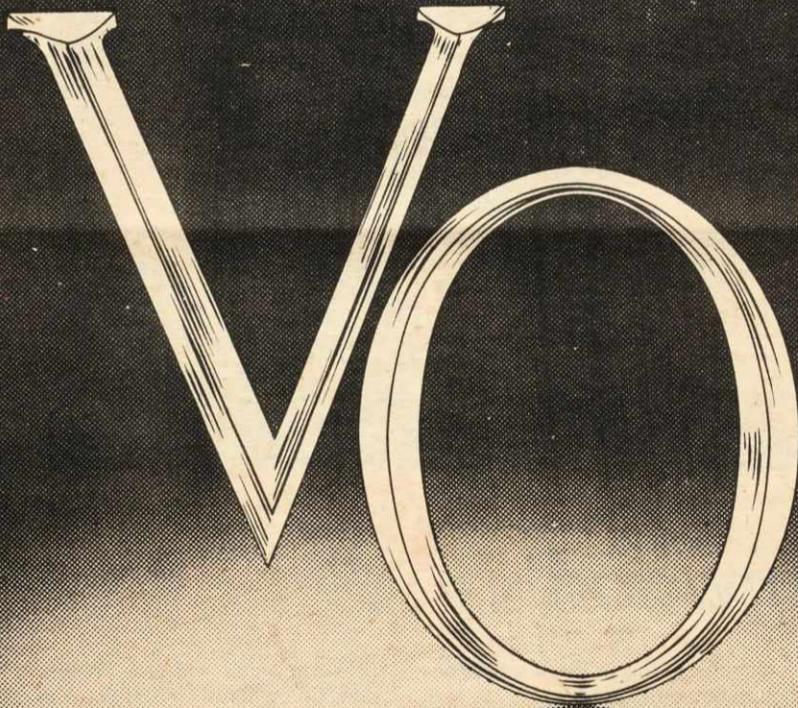
"When did we decide this?" questioned Kavanagh.

"It is the attitude of the government that if you haven't dropped out, if something drastic hasn't happened to you, there is not a problem," said Kavanagh.

Students must choose between "the lesser of two evils", said Kavanagh. You can either finish the year with no idea how you will pay for it or drop out and waste money and time you have already invested. And then students are blamed for making the only choice there is to make.

"The province doesn't seem to care and that," said Kavanagh, "is an attitude that's almost impossible to deal with."

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