

gov't goes ahead

Student aid bill 'inequitable'

OTTAWA (CUP)—Despite vocal opposition from student organizations and predictions to the contrary, the federal government has gone ahead with legislation that increases the amount of money students will be forced to borrow before they receive grants.

Bill C-37, an Act to Amend the Canada Student Loans Act, was introduced March 22, indicating the government has decided to proceed with controversial changes which the National Union of Students and provincial and regional student organizations have criticized as regressive.

While the bill will assess students' needs on a weekly rather than yearly basis—a welcomed amendment—an increase in the maximum amount borrowable to \$70 per week will place the burden of inflation on students. Since the last loan ceiling increase in 1975, provincial governments, which fund the grant portion of students aid, have had to absorb increases in the assessment education costs.

The loan ceiling increase restores loans as roughly two-thirds of the amount awarded under aid programs.

Despite increases in the amount a student must borrow each year,

Students fight differential tuition fees

MONTREAL (CUP)—A committee of students from Montreal's four universities is escalating its fight against differential fees which the Quebec government plans to impose on international students this fall.

The committee plans to present a petition at a demonstration March 31 in front of government buildings in Montreal, outlining their disagreement with the fees, which will increase education costs for international students studying in the province by 300 per cent.

Committee spokesperson Edward Kravitz from Concordia University said March 29 the increase "will wipe out a whole category of visa students that will have financial problems."

"The international students constitute the most vulnerable part of the student body, and they're certainly not here on a vacation," he said. More than 75 per cent of Quebec's 10,000 visa students come from Third World countries and are here to get a quality education they cannot get in their native countries.

The committee, which brings together students from Université de Montreal and du Quebec a Montreal, McGill and Concordia Universities says the provincial government's decision follows the trend established by the new federal Immigration Act, a measure they say is racist.

The act, which comes into effect April 10, is also limiting international student participation on the committee, Kravitz said. The bill puts a number of arbitrary powers into the hands of immigration officers, such as refusal to grant visas for students suspected of subversive activities.

The committee has received the support of student councils, the Association Nationale des Etudiants du Quebec, and native peoples' associations.

the bill does not change the lifetime maximum borrowable figure—\$9,800—which has remained unchanged through the last few ceiling increases.

Aid programs until the mid-1970s assumed seven years of study in calculating the lifetime maximum. If that principle were retained with the proposed changes, a needy student in a professional faculty could be expected to have to borrow as much as \$20,000 to complete her or his education.

NUS suggests this relationship hasn't been kept up because this is an "outrageous figure. Even the most anti-student politician would have to say something," says NUS executive-secretary Dan O'Connor.

"If the seven year rule of thumb were maintained the madness of what the government is doing in student loans would become clear. They don't dare show their hand and bring together their changes with the principles of the aid

programs established in the 1960s."

The new bill also proposes giving much greater powers to aid officials in the areas of conditions for receiving and repaying loans. If approved, this would permit the government to make changes without "going public".

There are some positive measures in the bill, such as a proposal to drop a clause requiring "satisfactory scholastic standing" before students could become eligible for loans. While the requirement has been ignored in practice for some time, the change reflects opposition to a trend in some provinces—such

as Alberta and Nova Scotia—to use the loan system as a back-door academic standard.

O'Connor says this is "inequitable since it applies only to students who can't afford to pay the costs of their education themselves."

Student organizations were predicting the government might not go ahead with the amendments because opposition debate would take up parliamentary time, which is scarce before an upcoming election, for a measure not considered a priority for the federal government.

Answer to this week's cryptoquote:

It is a newspaper's duty to print the news and raise hell.
—The Chicago Tribune, 1861

The philosophers have only interpreted the world. The point, however, is to change it.
—Karl Marx



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