

Finance ministers meet in Halifax

Funding for post-secondary education is still unresolved

by Gregory Hamara

Two days of protracted haggling between the federal minister of finance, Allan MacEachen, and his 10 provincial counterparts, ended in Halifax on Tuesday, with questions of future federal funding to provincial health and post-secondary education programs still unresolved.

Despite his contention, at a post-conference press session, that the meeting was "useful, in that it extracted a frank exchange of ideas," MacEachen admitted that nothing had been resolved to the satisfaction of all parties involved.

Nova Scotia's Minister of Finance, Joel Matheson, readily agreed.

"We are no further ahead in our discussions with the federal government now than we were after the budget was announced," the provincial minister said, moments after emerging from the closed-door talks.

Despite federal calculations which show that Nova Scotia would benefit from Ottawa's plans to use Ontario as a median from which to determine the amount of per capita transfer funds received by the remaining nine provinces -- a plan designed to help have-not provinces like Nova Scotia -- Matheson remained unimpressed.

"The base the minister is choosing (Ontario) does not

rest well with this province," said Matheson. "What that effectively does is tie the remainder of the country to the economic well-being of Ontario."

In the past, the federal government has based per capita transfer payments on a national average of all 10 provinces.

Matheson said that he would be meeting shortly with Minister of Education, Terrence Donahoe, to analyse whatever results could be gleaned from the conference's deliberations. Donahoe is scheduled to attend a meeting of the secretary of state for federal-provincial relations and the 10 provincial ministers of education set for Toronto on

December 7. Matheson refused to say what advice he intended to pass along to Donahoe.

The current financial imbroglio between the two levels of government can be traced to provincial concerns over MacEachen's proposals, contained in the November 12 budget statement, that Ottawa intends to cutback \$5.7 billion in Established Programs Financing (EPF) payments by fiscal year 1986-87.

For his part, MacEachen claims that a large portion of lost federal transfer funds will be re-couped by the provinces through a re-adjustment of the current tax structure. In spite of a federal gaffe which revealed a \$600 million miscalculation in

MacEachen's budget, the minister maintained, on the eve of the conference, that the federal cutback would not seriously harm health or post-secondary education programs.

According to MacEachen's plans, the provinces will be able to generate \$3.7 billion through new tax alterations. The provinces, however, will not be bound to re-route these funds back into health or post-secondary education.

Despite their failure to reach even a minimal accord, the finance ministers agreed to get together once again, this time in Toronto on December 14, to toss out the problem for further discussion.

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Students have harder time entering engineering

by Cathy McDonald

Dalhousie Engineering put the pinch on enrolment for the first time this year as eligible applicants outnumbered the department's capacity in terms of room and staff, according to Director David Lewis.

A main restriction in the number of students Dal can accept has to do with the Technical University of Nova Scotia's (TUNS) capacity for students, where graduates from the two-year Dal program complete their degree.

Last year saw 220 students in the "Graphics" class, the compulsory first year course, as opposed to 150 this year.

"Enrolment wasn't watched carefully enough," Lewis said, referring to last year.

This year only those students were accepted who had a high school average of 78%, which is "not the best way," Lewis said. However, if marks were the only indication a student gave to qualify for the engineering program, the department had no choice but to use this level of academic prowess as its qualifier.

Lewis said the administration agrees that the department should expand, but the capacity for students must first increase at Technical University.

"Tech is at its limit" in terms of teaching staff, said Lewis. In fact, using the specialty area of mechanical engineering as an example, all universities in Canada have openings for professors.

The main difficulty is in competing with the salary levels in the business community. Universities have resorted to 'raiding' other universities, hoping to attract professors to their programs, Lewis said.

If Technical University gets the government support to expand, Lewis is confident that the Dal administration would support adding on another 'module', or class of 75 first year students to the program. As students drop out, this number would reduce to 50 graduates entering TUNS.

Lewis supported the clause

"except under unusual circumstances" which was inserted into the Senate proposal to stop all new faculty appointments, currently under debate at Dalhousie.

The additional funds coming from students, and government funding based on enrolment, would pay for the needed faculty.

Other universities who send their graduates to TUNS, namely Acadia, Mount Allison, Saint Mary's, Saint Francis Xavier universities), are similarly restricted in their enrolment levels, said Lewis.

Tuition in B.C. to rise

VANCOUVER (CUP) — The federal government's new budget will force tuition fees to rise at least 60 per cent next year, British Columbia finance minister Hugh Curtis said November 12.

Each B.C. post-secondary student will have to pay \$370 more in tuition next year, in addition to already planned increases by the individual institutions, Curtis said.

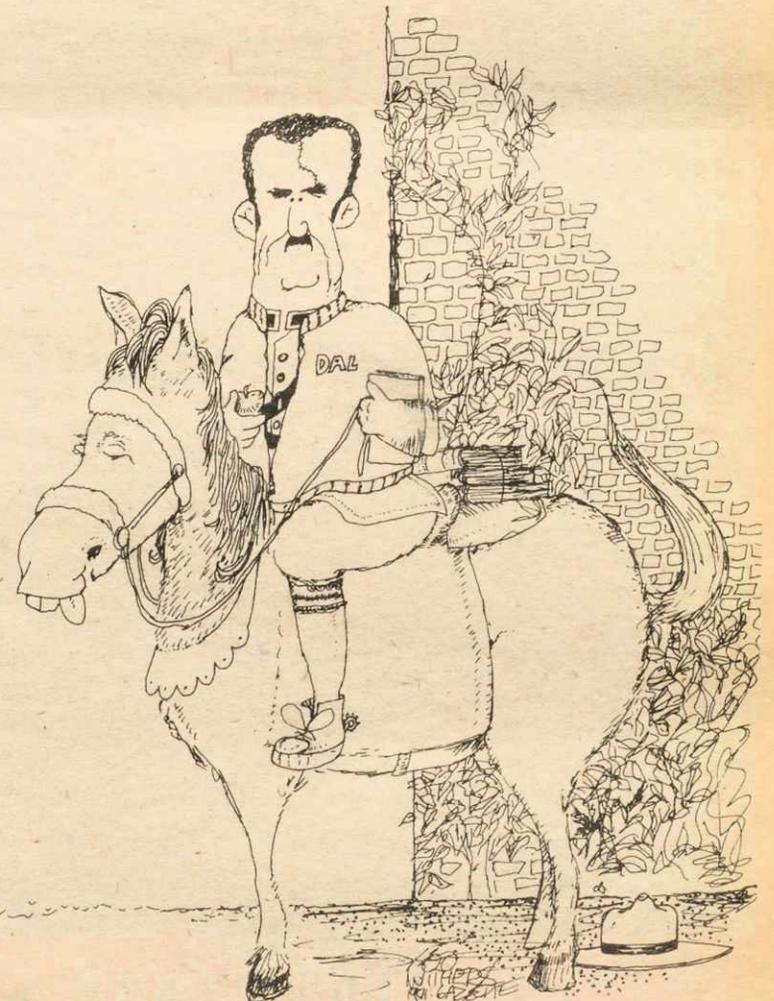
"Post-secondary education and health care in B.C. and in the other provinces have been hard hit as a result of the federal budget", he said.

The federal government will remove \$5.7 billion of federal

transfer payments to provinces for post-secondary education and health care over the next five years. The provinces were given additional taxation powers amounting to \$3.7 billion, but these funds are not necessarily earmarked for education.

UBC students already face a minimum 15 per cent increase for next year, to conform to the UBC board of governors policy to have tuition fees represent at least 10 per cent of the university's operating budget.

The federal move will cost B.C. \$91 million during the next fiscal year, and \$600 million over the next five years, Curtis said.



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