



Photo: John Davie, Dal Photo

## Will big blue machine mow education under?

By DANIELLE COMEAU

Behind the glossy campaign, the slick image and the well-oiled Big Blue Machine are stacks of Tory promises. Led by a grinning Brian Mulroney, the Progressive Conservatives have promised a new Canada.

But the party has little new to offer students.

Students seeking a change from the Liberal approach to education—including a steady decline in the amount of money pumped into post-secondary institutions, student aid and student job-training programmes—will be disappointed when they examine what the Tories have pledged to give.

According to a Canadian Federation of Students questionnaire sent to each of the three major parties, the Conservative promises to students include:

- On-going funding for the basic operating costs of universities and colleges through the Established Programmes Financing act;
- A return to the 1977 federal-provincial funding agreement which called for a forum on post-secondary education between the two levels of government;
- A \$285 million job creation scheme for unemployed youth;
- No change in the Canada student loans programme except when the recession ends, at which time the Tories intend to remove the exemption order allowing jobless students to not pay prime rates on their loans;
- Twice as much money to research and development in their first term of office or no more than 2.5 per cent of the gross national product;
- A new era in federal-provincial co-operation.

With the exception of youth unemployment, politicians did not welcome student issues in the campaign. Only the New Democrats agreed to a national debate on these issues, while the Liberals did not even bother to return the CFS questionnaire.

CFS chair Beth Olley warns the huge Conservative majority—211 seats—"leaves a little to be desired and means they can do what they want."

She says lobby groups like CFS must play watchdog over the government to ensure the Conservatives make good on their promises.

Although the Tories reached the top of the electoral heap by promising a fresh approach, their policy on university funding is anything but original.

Prime Minister Brian Mulroney has dug up the former Liberal government's original EPF proposal from 1977, blown off the dust and called it his own. The '77 EPF act differs from the current state of funding in two ways: today the provinces are no longer consulted about changes to the act, and as a result of the passage of Bill C-12 last year, EPF is now under the six and five restraint programme.

According to the Canadian Association of University Teachers, funding under EPF has steadily deteriorated as both the federal and provincial governments cut education budgets and blame each other for the shortfall.

One example of a province which has not been passing on federal money intended for education is British Columbia. According to the *CAUT Bulletin*, the B.C. government cut university funding by 24 per cent this year, while pocketing funding increases from the federal government.

The only province to match federal funding last year was Manitoba.

Caught in the middle of federal-provincial bickering are students and a financially strapped education system.

Mulroney thinks increased co-operation between the feds and the provinces will alleviate this problem and that his government will not have to resort to strong-arm tactics, such tactics as tied-funding.

Olley says the Tories passed up their chance to prove they are different than the Liberals.

While in opposition benches, Conservatives strongly opposed the Liberals' imposing of Bill C-12 retroactively, which cut federal transfer payments by \$378 million in two years. Now that they are in government, however, they say they will not make up for the loss.

"I think it's hypocritical," Olley says.

She is also critical of the Tory party's youth job creation schemes, calling the wording of the plans "hazy."

"They are so hazy they could be low-paying slave jobs and they would not meet the needs of the large part of the population. Mulroney needs to create permanent jobs."

The Prime Minister says he will create youth jobs by encouraging

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## "Grass roots" paths broken on disarmament

By PETER BESSEAU

A seven-day, three-city tour of the Soviet Union has left Halifax professor C.G. Gifford encouraged that new "grass roots" paths are being broken which will lead toward new pressures on governments for nuclear disarmament.

Gifford, a representative of the Halifax-based Veterans for Multilateral Nuclear Disarmament, visited war memorials in Moscow, Leningrad and Volgograd with two other Canadian veterans groups at the invitation of their Soviet counterparts from August 20-27.

Veterans for Multilateral Nuclear Disarmament formed nearly four years ago when a number of veterans came out in support of statements issued by a group of retired NATO military figures which included the late Admiral Lord Mountbatten and U.S. Admiral Rickover, who charged that current NATO nuclear strategies were not only outdated, but dangerous.

The group is concerned about the "lunacy" of overkill capacities of current nuclear arsenals, saying that it increases the danger of accidental nuclear war.

Gifford's group argues that present nuclear arsenals, with six minute delivery capabilities, have made recall or destruction of accidentally triggered strikes virtually impossible. The absence of nuclear war, in their opinion, has become more a matter of chance and less a military option as technology becomes more efficient.

Meeting with both active and retired Soviet military officials, the veterans group exchanged ideas on nuclear disarmament and on the present state of east-west relations. Gifford says that nuclear disarmament activists now play an important role in view of the hostile climate of U.S.-Soviet relations.

Saying that westerners in general are "insensitive" to Soviet history, Gifford remarks that considering the devastation of WWII and post-war U.S. policies, he is "willing to excuse a degree of paranoia" in the Soviet approach to national defence.

The group says that while human rights violations in the Soviet Union are abhorrent to them, external threat will not solve the problem. In their policy statement, the veterans say that "history shows that internal repression is increased by external threats, not decreased. We believe that threatening the Soviet Union and its allies with nuclear attack must only make the plight of these millions worse. Any hope for expansion of human rights in the Soviet Union or elsewhere requires a relaxation of tension, and replacement of nuclear threats with political solutions to international conflicts."

Central to this position is the group's call for multilateral nuclear disarmament and an opening of communication between east and west on all levels.

Criticism has often been levelled against peace groups in the Soviet Union because they do not share the autonomy of similar groups in the west, tending instead to mouth the Communist party line laying all the blame on the U.S.

Gifford, however, is hopeful that the memory of the last war and the apparent closeness of the next will, at least among the various veteran groups, provide room for serious and sincere talks in the future.

Western veteran groups will have an opportunity to test the sincerity of Soviet veterans next month when the World Veterans Foundation meets in Belgrade to thrash out a joint policy statement. □

## DSU makes ties with OXFAM

By MICHAEL F. KEIVER

OXFAM'S Nicaraguan literacy program was chosen as the main charity of the student union for this year, says Dalhousie Student Union community

affairs secretary Reza Rizvi.

Nicaragua has one of the most successful literacy programs in history. The program reduced literacy from 50.3% of the population to 12.9%. OXFAM helps to fund literacy programs for both children and adults.

OXFAM is primarily an agency

which works in the third world, however, locally it supports development education and development projects such as the programs in Nicaragua.

"It's impossible to separate the political from the social in Nicaragua," said John Kirk, a Dalhousie Spanish professor. □