

Senator Chris Nagle blasts student agitators

By CHRISTOPHER NAGLE
UNB Student Senator

Well, well, well, - it's that time of

year again where the reliable old headline-grabbing dinosaur studentus aidus rex is dragged out of

the closet again and dusted off. Once more student politicians trot out the tattered banners, beating

the mournful drums, decrying the inhumanity of the facists controlling New Brunswick. And, of course, once more we are all but shunned by an indifferent government. Well to hell with the whole damn circus.

But the rest of it should be junked if we expect to get any kind of support behind us at all.

Is It Any Wonder?

Given the shortcomings outlined above of our campaign, is it any wonder that it was such an abject failure? What can we do the next time around to ensure our success? Well the first thing we should do is try and draw up a more reasonable set of demands regarding student aid. As far as I'm concerned, the problem with student aid lies not in the dollar amounts available but in the fairness of the system that's supposed to be passing them out. We all can tell true-life stories of impoverished kids getting a big \$50 while some well-connected affluent kid gets the maximum loan & bursary with which he buys a two-seater. In this respect the demand that student representatives sit on policy boards so as to police operations is sensible.

A Real Shame

This pseudo-controversy has been excessively visible from ever since I care to remember. Granted, the existing student aid system does suffer deficiencies - but they don't warrant all the hoopala that some student leaders insist on giving it. It's a real shame because through actions like strikes, calling down the government, etc., all we manage to do is generate a feeling of ill will towards us by the populace of this province. Better ways do exist to go about improving our present situation.

The only way we can get government to listen to us is to create a strong bargaining stance for ourselves. Once this is done, they will be forced to listen to us in good faith.

Two things are crucial in determining the bargaining strength of any organization purporting to represent a cause:

- 1) commitment in numbers and intensity of feeling of the group represented.
- 2) the political clout possessed by the pressure group. (In this case our political clout would be our ability to get other groups: citizens in general interested in our cause).

Shrug

This time around our handling of the situation showed serious deficiencies in both respects - there seemed to be lack of intense feeling on the subject by students here and likewise few outside groups (excepting the N.B. Federation of Labour) showed any real interest in our cause. It would seem that the general consensus on the part of everyone regarding this matter can be expressed in one word - shrug.

What's wrong? I think that one of our problems lies in the amount of common sense used in drawing up the demands. To put it bluntly they're sheer bunk for the most part. Looking over some of these demands I can't help but wonder who in hell had the audacity to draw up such an asinine set of proposals. How did they expect to get government, citizens, or even students to treat these as reasonable? It's a wonder we weren't greeted by hoots of raucous laughter. Granted, not all the demands were ridiculous - the demand that a representative of student interests be seated on governmental policy-making bodies dealing with student aid was pretty sensible; as was the demand that the interest-free period of loan repayment be extended from six months to a

year. But the rest of it should be junked if we expect to get any kind of support behind us at all.

Let's remember that, compared to most civilized countries, Canada is Fat City when it comes to college. Two-thirds of our tuition is subsidized by Federal-Provincial governments. They in turn also disburse millions of dollars more each year in the forms of loans, bursaries, scholarships and outright grants. To my mind, any demands for higher loans & bursaries will only serve to alienate taxpayers and thus weaken our bargaining position vis a vis government.

Once we have whipped our demands into a reasonable framework we can then proceed to generate some strength behind our position. Perhaps the easiest way is to circulate petitions in major N.B. towns & cities to try and get the "Mom & Pop" vote behind us. When you push ten thousand or more signatures of voting citizens in Hatfield's face, he'll begin to take an interest in student aid. He will have been shown that the student aid controversy is indeed a genuine social problem - and not just a hyped-up creation of a handful of shrill students.

In summary, I would like to say that I in no way doubt the sincerity of the people who organized the last demonstration and strike. The energy and zeal was there - you could taste it - but they were banging their heads against a brick wall. The energy is there but we have to make efficient use of the potential strength available to us if we are to have any hope of re-shaping the government's attitude towards student aid.



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Yearbook '76

We need photos! Students please take note - if you wish to submit anything for yearbook. We need it soon!

Any write-ups or photos of teams, residences and organizations must be in to us no later than Feb. 28.

If you need a photographer for your special events, let us know. We're in Room 31, SUB and our number is 453-4983

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