

EDITORIAL

Feds may axe education funding— what then?

Right now, the federal government is studying alternatives for reducing spending under the Established Programs Financing Act. The EPF act presently provides the provinces with about \$1.6 billion dollars a year for education funding, and one of the proposals being considered will cut almost exactly this amount from the EPF payments. What this very well could mean is that when the present agreement expires in April of 1982, that the federal funding of universities will completely vanish.

This is such a serious cut in university funding that the probability is the provinces won't even be able to begin to match the missing funds from the provincial coffers. We are constantly fighting the provinces through our student representatives on SUNS over inflationary increases in tuition. The proposed cuts, however, are to inflationary increases the same way a speeding Mack truck compares with a child's tricycle. There is a basic difference in the scale of the problem. Presuming the provinces refuse to match the missing federal funds, many of the institutions in the Maritimes may simply close their doors permanently. Estimates of the cuts in post-secondary funding are roughly \$50 million for the Maritime's share of the EPF transfers. Since the total operating grants in our provinces in the region a total only \$161 million, this could mean, for instance, \$10 to \$15 million being cut from the operating grant to Dalhousie University.

As one of our staff members commented, John and Jim Logan's election platform of increasing tuition to \$5000 to make Dal become an ivy-league university no longer seems to be quite so preposterous. The only difference is, the tuition may increase to \$5000, but we still won't be an ivy-league university.

Certainly, the uproar at SUNS conferences, the positions detailed in NUS and AUCC briefs and letters to the Prime Minister are all justified by the alternatives being presently considered. How-

ever, there is even more to the issue of these cuts in funding than the dire financial straits that everybody on this campus would be in if they occurred.

For years, the issue of accessibility of education has been brought up by NUS and SUNS, among other student organizations. There are a lot of people who can't presently afford tuition fees. This is one of the problems of accessibility for lower and middle income families who want their youth to go to work after high school. Now, however, the issue of accessibility is not just the problem of paying massive fee hikes, it is the question of whether or not your university is going to go bankrupt before you can register for classes. For potential university students living near some of the small universities (Mt. St. Allison, St. Thomas, the Agricultural College, among others) this is a real danger. Even if the institution doesn't go under immediately, the quality of education may very well decline so rapidly the students will wish it had gone belly up.

In view of the federal governments present policy of moving towards funding research as opposed to academic activities, it must be seen that there won't be any people to do the research in five years is if they aren't taught now. The financing of the quest for knowledge isn't something that can be put into a straitjacket labeled "industry-oriented research", and the sooner the federal government realizes this, the better everyone in our country will be.

From every point of consideration, then, such a reduction of the federal cost-sharing arrangements would lead us to undesirable results. When SUNS delegates meet again in two weeks to start planning a summer symposium on post-secondary education, (tentatively titled 'Education is an industry' to get the point across to bureaucrats accustomed to working with balance sheets), it must be hoped that such efforts will help to gain community awareness and support for the value of university education. The

symposium, which is hoped will occur in Allan MacEachen's home riding, has been tentatively titled 'Education is an Industry', presumably in order to get the point of the practical value of education across to bear bureaucrats

accustomed to working with balance sheets. Beyond that symposium, SUNS may have to do the most intensive campaigning of its lifetime if these federal cuts look like a reality. In such a situation, the support of every single stu-

dent, faculty member, and university administrator across the Maritime region will have to be needed to ensure the future of our universities as contributing members of Canadian society.



the Dalhousie Gazette

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