

The federal election and where

by Jeff Parr

While all of the three major political parties are running flat out to endear themselves to every sector of the Canadian electorate, they are more than aware that this time the student vote is something to contend with. Students have not been on campus at election time since 1972. Not since then have the parties had to look at post-secondary campuses as an important reservoir of electoral support.

The Liberals have sent Pierre Trudeau to major campuses in key ridings; while the NDP has had Ed Broadbent speaking at virtually any campus that will take him. Joe Clark's lukewarm reception at BCIT in Vancouver, and openly hostile reception at York University in Toronto seem to have convinced Tory strategists that campus life is not for their leader.

In spite of the stakes involved in the swing ridings of metro Toronto, Clark is the only major party leader to cancel a speaking engagement at the University of Toronto. Instead, U of T students were entertained by the colorful performance of minister of finance, John Crosbie.

But what about student issues? Reference to student issues has been conspicuously absent from party messages to students.

The National Union of Students surveyed the Progressive Conservatives, Liberals and the NDP early in January to discover where they stood on issues important to students and the future of post-secondary education. Four of the most prominent issues raised in the student questionnaire were, student aid, job creation, unemployment insurance, and federal funding for post-secondary education.

Student aid

In 1963 Lester Pearson and the Liberal party, campaigning had to form the new government, promised to introduce a student aid program of 10,000 scholarships of \$1,000 each. The Canadian Union of Students (CUS) changed its position favouring a national bursary plan, to support the liberals' scholarship proposal. But the next year, the liberals abandoned their

scholarship promise and introduced the Canada Student Loans Plan.

CUS was critical of the plan because it did not benefit students from low income families. Low income students, they maintained, started their academic career with a greater financial handicap, and less secure economic future and as a result were reluctant to borrow money to finance their education.

The Liberal government of the 1970s stalled on students' demand for a new student aid plan, and for short term improvements to the Canada Student Loans plan and an end to loan ceiling increases.

The loan ceiling was increased from \$1,000 to \$1,400 in 1972, and again to \$1,800 in 1975. In 1978 and in 1979, the Liberal government tried to slip through another loan ceiling increase by including it in a package designed to win support from students and opposition parties. But student cooperation with opposition parties in 1978 and the federal election in May 1979 held them in check.

The federal and provincial governments also tried to come up with an alternative program to the Canada Student loans plan in 1974. They struck a task force that reported in 1975; the report was reviewed by the provinces in 1976 but the federal government vetoed the major task force proposals.

The task force report was never released to the public.

The fledgling conservative government moved this fall to win some student support using the issue of student aid. They agreed to establish another federal-provincial task force to review student aid in Canada and they committed themselves to act on its recommendations. In response to students' demand for short term improvements to the student loans plan, and no loan ceiling increases, they agreed to introduce short term changes as soon as possible, without the loan ceiling increase that had become such a persistent feature of the Liberals' student aid amendments.

The three parties were asked if they supported students' call for a new student aid plan, if they would support continued federal government par-

ticipation in the student aid task force, and if they would support student participation on that task force.

The Liberal party was mum on the question of a new student aid plan, and said that education was a provincial responsibility. (The Canada Student Loans Plan is a federal government program.) But it did commit itself to support continued federal participation in the student aid task force, and to support student participation on the task force.

The Tories held up their record while in government to prove their support for student calls for a new student aid program and for continued federal participation on the student aid task force. They did not answer the question on student participation on the task force, but the Conservative Secretary of State, David MacDonald, told NUS just before the government was defeated that he would not support student representatives on the task force.

Yes on all three questions, that was the response of the NDP. They pointed to their record in opposition as proof of their support for student participation on the task force, and elaborated on their support for a new student aid plan by saying that the government should shoulder a greater burden of expanding access to affordable education.

Student job creation

Unemployment is becoming a familiar but worn issue among the Canadian electorate. Crafty politicians have been able to work on that worn familiarity, and convince many people that the unemployed are whining about a problem of their own making. A graphic illustration of that is the million dollar ad campaign fingering unemployment insurance "cheaters" that set the stage for the Liberal government's wholesale cut of the unemployment insurance program just before Christmas 1978.

For students looking for work after finishing school for the summer, or for good, the problem of unemployment soon becomes obviously more than just one of their own making.

Last July, there were 190,000 students out of work, in spite of the Liberal government's direct job creation program that set its sights on 68,000 jobs.

The job creation package developed by the conservative government for this summer did not differ in substance from that of its liberal predecessor. Had their budget passed, the Tories' year-round tax credit job creation program was to be expanded. The cost to the federal government would be \$250 million this year, compared with \$100 million the year before.

But that type of job creation program has been criticized as being more of a tax gift to corporations than a serious method of job creation. Critics have noted that it can be an economical and easy way to replace permanent employees with less expensive students or young people hired through the government's tax credit program.

Direct job creation measures for this summer were announced by the Conservatives' Employment and Immigration minister, Ron Atkey, in January. The total package was to cost the federal government \$3 million less than last year but created 2,000 more jobs. That would put the Tory target at 70,000 jobs created.

A significant part of the program is a \$12.6 million transfer to the department of national defence for cadet and reserve training. That's a 20 per cent increase over last year. And it's supposed to create 18,000 jobs. But can they be called jobs?

The Cadet training program is for people who are already members of the Cadets between the ages of 13 and 18. They will receive no salary, but at the end of the six-week training program they will receive a \$100 training bonus, if they make it.

Reserve training is basic military training, not unlike the militia, for people between the ages of 17 and 34. The salary is \$136 a week.

The Tories also allocated \$61.9 million, a cut of \$15.1 million to municipalities and non-profit organizations for community-oriented job creation projects. They are expected to create 33,000 jobs. Money going to federal government departments and agencies was increased by \$18 million to \$35 million. It is supposed to create 18,500 jobs. The rate of pay for all of these projects is the minimum wage in the province where the job is created. The National Union of Students is calling for the minimum project wage to be no lower than \$3.50 an hour.

The other feature of the program is a Hire A Student ad campaign and the operation of student employment centres. An additional plum of \$500,000 is going to local chambers of commerce to promote youth employment among local businesses. Employment and immigration officials predict that it will produce about 500 jobs directly, though there is no guarantee that they will be jobs for students or young people.

So, what about job creation for the more than 190,000 facing unemployment this summer? All three of the parties said there was no such thing as an acceptable level of unemployment. But when asked about the specifics of the job creation proposals, they were short on details.

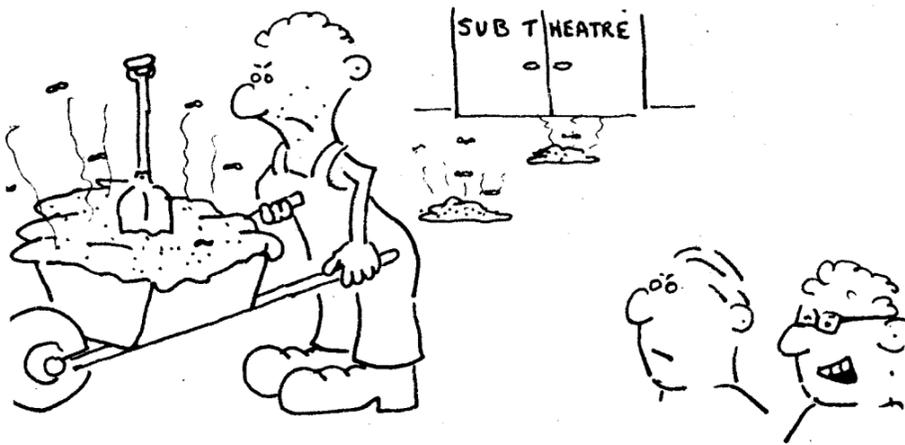
The liberals said only that they would develop industrial policies that would create jobs, build greater economic strength in each region of the country, and that they would manage more rigorously the nation's finances.

The NDP took up the call for a detailed strategy of industrial development as well, but added that they would expand job creation projects and re-instate youth as a target group in employment-related programs. They said that the programs would be supported by eliminating "the kind of tax give-aways that have so enamoured the Liberals and Conservatives to the business community."

Meanwhile the Tories defended the job creation measures they introduced in January and proposed in their defeated budget as adequate measures to address the problem of youth and student unemployment.

Unemployment Insurance

For the students who can't find work this summer, Unemployment Insurance may be their only potential source of income. But, while economists have been predicting economic decline and higher unemployment, the federal government has decided that now is the time to put the axe to unemployment insurance.



DENNIS

I SEE THE ELECTION SPEECHES HAVE STARTED.

REWARD

Tools and electrical material stolen at Anton Lake Road out of a 1960 red GMC service truck ¾ ton, parked on shoulder of Government gravelled road. Time: January 27 (Saturday) 11 p.m., 1980. Total Value: \$4,100.00

Please Call: Corp. Baxter, RCMP Redwater 1-735-3600

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EYEWITNES
REPORT and
SLIDES from
NICARAGUA

SPEAKER: Mutale Chan
TIME: 11:00 a.m.
DATE: Friday, February
PLACE: Tory Basement,

ALSO: Friday evening, 7:
113 Street and Jasper Av

Everyone Welcome!