

# The Grad Zone

The UNB Graduate Student Association

## The government is not always responsible

by Peter Ferguson

In the past few weeks much has been said about the New Brunswick government's proposed freeze on spending for post-secondary education. Education at all levels, but especially at higher levels has been touted by politicians as a means of "improving competitiveness in a global economy". No mention is made of the value of education in participatory democracy, but then, has any politician ever expressed a desire for a more knowledgeable electorate?

It's with this idea of democracy that I wish to frame today's article.

Education isn't (solely) a government responsibility. People complain about the government "not doing/spending enough", but do we consider whether we have been doing enough? Have students examined their role(s) in the education process as "shapers", too, rather than just "consumers"? For most students, the global economy, international competitiveness, and all the other (perhaps true) governmental cliches aren't what motivate us to pursue our studies. (At least I hope we don't think of ourselves as cogs in the wheels of the national economy). No, we want

well-paying, fulfilling careers. And yes, many of us pursue education for the (gasp!) enjoyment of learning.

There's an inherent danger in letting government alone decide what the goals of education should be: its purposes for education and those of students are not necessarily the same.

It takes a possible interruption in the government's already substantial financial support of post-secondary education to get students to think about post-secondary education in Canada. But what do we really contribute to the democratic process by merely asking for (or demanding) more money? Can't students contribute to the decision-making process in more constructive ways than doing nothing? Or protesting for more money and when it doesn't come (the government really does have fiscal problems), slowly resigning ourselves to the fact so that, in the end, we've still done nothing? Do we ever seriously re-examine or reaffirm what we expect of the education system? Do we ever really consider Canada's national goals as well as our own individual goals? And do we regularly ask ourselves

if Canada is on the road to achieving these goals? It takes more than money to make our educational system work. It'll take more than just money to improve it.

As graduate students we should accept that the highest demands be placed on us in assessing the education system in this country. We are, after all, the best educated, most mature segment of the student population. The most resources have been invested in us. We ourselves have invested much (time, money, lost income...) in pursuing graduate studies. We have much to gain in participating in the decision-making. And we have much to contribute.

The Graduate Student Association, Inc. at UNB is a member of the Canadian Federation of Students. The CFS represents post-secondary students nationwide. We agree with its fundamental aims of accessible post-secondary education and stronger federal government involvement in post-secondary education. But the GSA executive is concerned that the CFS is not strictly keeping to its mandate. Further, the GSA executive has concerns that the voice of graduate students is not adequately

heard by the CFS. As stated above, we have much to gain, but we also have much to contribute - despite our smaller numbers.

The GSA will be reassessing its continued membership in the CFS. You will be part of the debate. And you will make the final decision by referendum (more details later in upcoming GSA newsletters). To facilitate the debate process and to

help the GSA establish the needs of graduate students at UNB, a survey of graduate students will be conducted later this spring.

In the meantime, we hope you will consider your graduate student experience at UNB, and consider what changes are necessary at UNB and in graduate student concerns nationally.

Next week... "the cost of education"

### NOTICES

**SATURDAY,  
FEBRUARY 14**

GSA Social featuring "High Divin' Act" at the University Club (3rd Floor of the Old Arts Building).  
**8:00 p.m.**

THE CLUB  
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Valentine Party

Friday

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\$100 Cash Draw at 11 p.m.

Cupid Helps You Win!

**TUESDAY'S - GUY'S NITE**

• 8 p.m. - 10 p.m. Sports Trivia • Win Cash & Prizes •

**WEDNESDAY'S - HOUSE PARTY**

• Guest D.J. Sasha •

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