

Student aid system desperate

by Jeff Harrington

HALIFAX (CUP) — A veritable posse of education ministers will ride into Ottawa Feb. 25, hoping to rescue Canada's badly wounded student aid system.

The Council of Ministers of Education will try to persuade

all," said Jane Arnold, chair of the Canadian Federation of Students (CFS).

CFS, which represents over 400,000 college and university students, has called for a national system of grants — to be paid for with corporate taxes — to ensure equal access regardless of eco-

A committee created by the government recommended in January 1989 that the program be revamped and allowances be increased. But the government ignored its suggestions and has hired a private firm to do an "independent study."

The Conservatives have also capped transfer payments to the provinces for two years, and plan to reduce them after that. These funds — given to the provinces for health and education — account for more than 50 per cent of university funding. New Democrat education critic Chris Axworthy has calculated that the payments will shrink to zero by the year 2004, taking inflation into account.

Arnold said that while presenting CFS's position on the cuts to a Senate committee last week, she was astounded by its tenuous grasp of the situation.

"One senator said there are too many students, and by cutting the number of students, we can cut down the crisis our universities are facing. What kind of attitude is that?" she said.

Meanwhile in Nova Scotia, an internal government report has backed up the grim assessment by the provinces and student groups of the CSLP.

The report, prepared by the province's advisory committee on

student aid, uses data from Statistics Canada to suggest that for many students in Nova Scotia, a university education is an impossible dream.

"It backs up what we've been saying all along," said Jeff Phelps, chair of the Student Union of Nova Scotia (SUNS).

The report examines students in a variety of financial situations and concludes that attending university in Nova Scotia "requires significantly more funds than are available" through the province's bursary program, CSLP and family savings.

It notes that 57 per cent of families in Nova Scotia make less than \$40,000 and can't save money to contribute to their children's education. It points out in a "disturbing" case study that even a student from a family making \$45,000 would not be able to attend university using all available resources. Even if the student received the maximum loan and provincial bursary and could get a summer job, he or she would still face a shortfall of \$1,564 annually.

Another case study concludes that a single parent on social assistance with two children would face a \$6,088 annual shortfall: attending university would "obviously be an impossibility." And that estimate assumes the student

could get a subsidized daycare space.

"Daycare is the biggest problem for single parents. The situation is awful," said Lynn MacMichael, who chairs SUNS' child care committee. She added that the last person who held her position had to quit school because she couldn't even find unsubsidized spaces at her university.

The report also details the negative effects that poor summer employment prospects and debt loads have on the number of students able to use the aid system.

SUNS chair Phelps said the report, along with "hard numbers" expected soon from a comprehensive student survey, should "put the ball in the government's court."

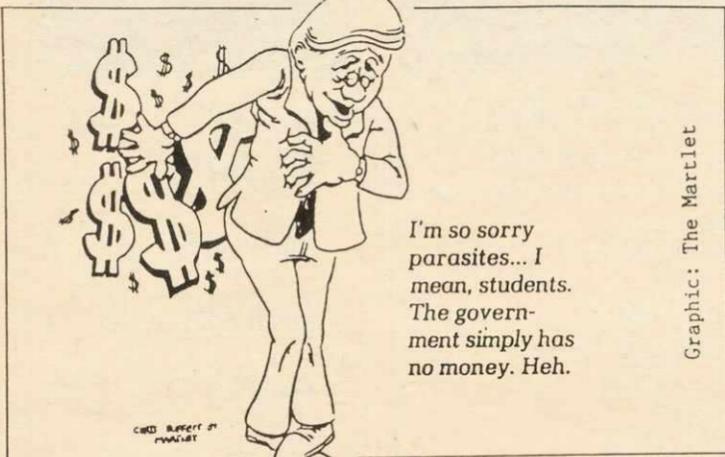
"If not, it's a hell of a weapon to mobilize demonstrations and rallies," he said.

Nova Scotia education minister Joel Matheson said the report "is still under review," but noted there is a consensus among the education ministers.

"The federal government has to update its approach to student aid to the needs of today," he said.

Jane Arnold agreed and went considerably further.

"The way things are going, they are creating a system where only the elite, only the rich will be able to attend," she said.



Graphic: The Martlet

I'm so sorry parasites... I mean, students. The government simply has no money. Heh.

Secretary of State Gerry Weiner that the Canada Student Loan Program (CSLP) is "in serious need of reform."

Major student lobby groups feel the federal Tory government is the bad guy, having let the CSLP stagnate to the point where it is of no use for many people and inadequate for others.

"Our biggest fight right now is to keep the federal government involved in (funding) education at

economic background. But given the Tory record on post-secondary education, Arnold said she's "being realistic."

The CSLP, created in 1964 on the premise that "inadequate finances should not prohibit people from attending college or university," has been in a time warp since the 1984-85 academic year. Despite inflation, allowable expenses such as rent, food and bus fare have remained frozen.

Business needs green conscience

by Alistair Croll

Alan Ruffman is an activist, and proud of it.

Speaking at the ninth annual Dalhousie Business Seminar, Ruffman told more than 200 people from the business community that very few of them have "an education in environmental sensitivity".

Ruffman, the president and director of Geomarine Associates, discussed the role of corporations in the environment with Ivan Blake of Environment Canada and Sarah Thorne of Dow Chemical.

Ruffman criticised higher education for its lack of coverage of environmental issues. "I'm appalled that you have no mandatory environment courses," he said.

"Any business school that lets its graduates go out into the business world [without environmental sensitivity] is irresponsible. Dalhousie is at the moment irresponsible."

"People who raise environmental issues tend to get reduced to 'activists' — and I'm sort of proud of it," he said. Ruffman proposed a variety of solutions and changes which could encourage businesses to think twice before neglecting their environment.

Ruffman cited accountability as

the big problem in the business world. If a person commits a crime against the environment, he said, "bringing that person and making them accountable is quite difficult." Many companies are "an incredible myriad of subsidiaries," and it is often impossible to place the blame on any one person.

A lack of women in business is another reason Ruffman gives for the problem. "A lot of environment groups are started by women. The business world is a male world. I suspect that will change in time."

An important step towards a cleaner environment, he said, is to make waste financially unwise.

Ruffman suggested a deposit on containers of all sorts, from plastic cups to styrofoam. "We have to say to industry, 'you can use [the environment] free of charge is you make no difference to it.' They will make themselves efficient to lower their costs."

Ruffman feels that if the envi-

ronment were a cost to businesses that abuse it, university curricula would shift to meet the rising demand for environmental sensitivity.

In a panel discussion following each of the three speakers, the issue of containers was raised.

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Peace protesters — never say die

by Paul Webster

Over the last weeks large numbers of people involved in the Halifax peace movement have demonstrated that protest against the Gulf War is growing, not subsiding.

Events and actions over the last week included the Women Against War protest on Saturday and teach-ins at NASCAD, Mount Saint Vincent and Dalhousie. As well, lectures on the environmental and development implications of the war were given at Dalhousie, and *perspective*, a journal aimed at elevating the level of public discourse on issues pertaining to the war will be published Friday the 8th.

• Over two hundred people marched from the Grand Parade to

the Halifax Militia Arsenal Saturday afternoon. The protest focused attention on the impact of the war on women and children in Canada, and in Iraq, where 45 per cent of the population are children.

Speakers emphasized that the costs of the war will be borne in Canada by low-income earners, a disproportionate number of whom are women. Protesters plastered the tank in front of the arsenal with flowers and chalk messages, which were immediately removed by military personnel.

• On Tuesday afternoon members of the Dalhousie Faculty held a teach-in in the McInnes room of the SUB. MPs Coline Campbell from the Liberals, Stephen Langdon from the NDP, Robert Corbett from the Progressive Conservatives and Rear Admiral

Fred Crickard spoke to and answered questions from the nearly 200 people present.

Langdon regretted that sanctions have been rejected for war. He pointed out that William Webster, Director of the CIA, testified before the U.S. Congress, in early December, that sanctions were working.

The veteran NDP House Member emphasized the importance of the Peace Movement by saying "We as Members of Parliament can only do so much, you can do much more. By speaking up, standing up for what you believe in, writing your Prime Minister, you can insist on our independence from the U.S., so that we're more than George Bush's puppydog."

Langdon concluded with a plea

that the "costs of this war do not fall on the poor of this country. There is much talk of budget cutbacks in Ottawa to pay for this war. Those cutbacks will hurt the poor."

Corbett's speech emphasized the legitimacy of the Government's reliance on U.N. involvement, and the necessity of checking Iraqi expansionism as justifications for Canadian participation in the war. He was unable to respond adequately to Campbell's reminder that very few U.N. member states have decided to have anything to do with the war. "The U.N. was used", she said, "the U.N. has given itself over to U.S. domination".

Campbell made a constructive call for Parliamentary reform. She deplored the lack of Parliamentary consultation and debate before the

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