

News Analysis

# Face it, Clancy: Free Trade is In

by Amber-Leigh Golding

The Canadian election of 1988 was a tale of two visions, or in the eyes of the opposition parties, more of a nightmarish scenario painted in Tory Blue. The real losers in the campaign just past were the Canadian people. This one-horse election, where the singular issue was Free Trade, may have been convenient for that very small minority of voters who felt it to be the only issue that mattered. The rest of Canadians, who typically hold dear, come election time, a longer list of issues than just one, were for the most part ignored.

Prime Minister Brian Mulroney and his Conservatives were easily returned back to power with elbow room to spare. Clearly, Canadians are not nearly so paranoid about Free Trade with the Americans as the political left believed them to be.

Though Liberal leader John Turner and NDP leader Ed Broadbent were decidedly vague about their future plans regarding the national scene, conceding that the public had indeed made its choice on the matter — local Liberal and New Democratic candidates across the country vowed to do everything in their power to stop the deal. Such MPs have yet to learn how to recognize a dead horse when they see one.

In a way, one's sympathy goes out to these people; Free Trade was the only thing they talked

about. Now, with that issue apparently decided (for the time being at least), the opposition politicians are stuck with the job of identifying a new agenda for their respective constituents.

Not surprisingly, many of these triumphant candidates are suggesting that the Prime Minister did not receive a mandate from the Canadian people. They point to the fact that more than half of the total votes cast were against the Conservative.

Moreover, the Liberals and New Democrats insist that their respective parties failed to form a government because of what they call "strategic voting". First of all, in Canada's three party system, popular vote majorities by one party are a rare political species. Opposition parties which exploit arguments like this one are copping out. They refuse to accept personal responsibility for their party's defeat at the polls.

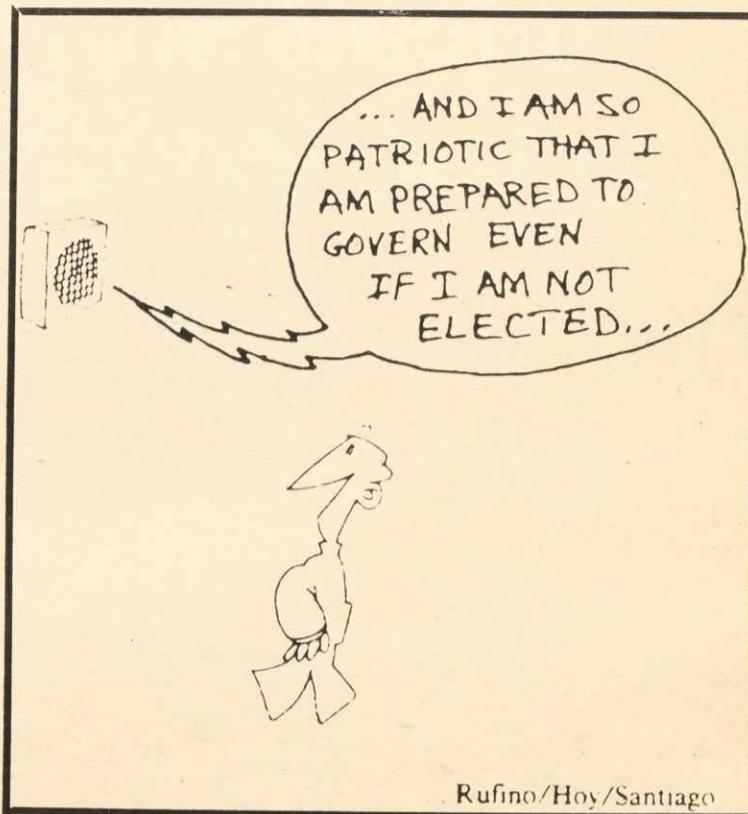
Nevertheless, they insist that vote-splitting was the culprit and that Mulroney has only minority support for his deal. This 'opposing' vote theory is a wrongheaded concept perpetuated by wrongheaded candidates. By adopting this view the Liberals and NDP seem to be suggesting to the public that everyone in the country who voted for them was in each and every case fanatically opposed to the deal. By implying this the opposition parties do grave discredit to themselves,

because they are essentially saying to the Canadian public, "No one supports us for ourselves. Votes that come our way are not specifically votes of support in our favour, but merely votes against a particular Conservative initiative."

Obviously this is not the case. Though one can imagine that many votes for the NDP were from people who were opposed to the free market system that the Mulroney deal encouraged, the Liberals can not say the same. Like the Tories, the Grits have a distinct core group that have voted with the same party whoever the personalities and whatever the issues. It is absurd for the Liberals to point to the combined Liberal and NDP votes as a pure anti-free trade power block.

Politicians may have talked only of the impending trade deal with the States but most voters had more than just that on their mind when they went to vote on election day.

Here in Halifax, Mary Clancy's win over Stewart McInnis — which left NDP challenger Ray Larkin far, far behind — was a logical extension of our provincial election back in September. Liberal voters were still sore about losing that one and decided to send Premier John Buchanan a none-too-subtle message. Clancy was the tool for that cryptic message.



Rufino/Hoy/Santiago

Halifax exchanged a cabinet minister for a newcomer representing the "wrong" party. At face value that's not the most advantageous swap in electoral history but then again the same thing was done to Liberal Gerald Regan when McInnis beat him out so you really can't tell at this point. Maybe Clancy has some

surprises in store. One thing is certain, however, and that is that it's going to be a fair while before Halifax Peninsula gets a cabinet posting again. For now, Clancy should ditch the free trade rhetoric and get on with something more productive, and ditto for Dartmouth's new Grit MP, Ron MacDonald.

## Native students protest

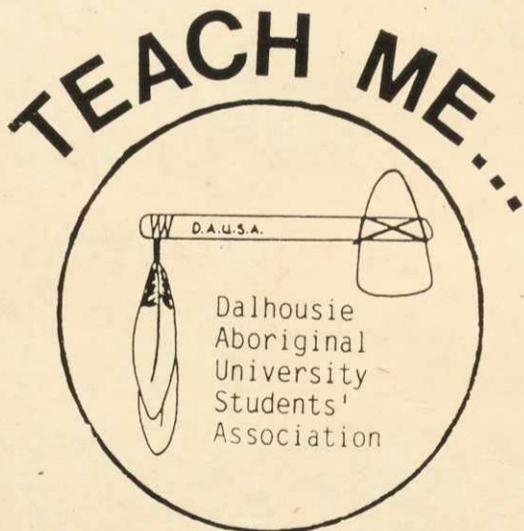
by Karen Bergen

Aboriginal students are gathering at Dalhousie this weekend to protest funding cuts which threaten the future of higher education for native students.

According to a Dalhousie Aboriginal Representative, a policy resulting in fewer graduates would deprive natives of the trained professionals needed to achieve their eventual self-government. Theresa Meuse says most of these students are in Arts programs, and will use their funding to get their undergraduate degree.

"Reduction of student weeks will prevent students from getting into professional schools", says Meuse. This will block education in programs such as law, medicine, nursing and administration. These programs are essential to native self-government, a process Meuse says "is not going to happen tomorrow, but could happen years down the road if we are educated."

"A student will only be eligible for 192 weeks of funding for post-secondary education", explains Jean Knockwood, Native Education Counsellor at Dalhousie. "That's a reduction of 88 weeks from the policy now in place, and a 50% reduction in weeks from the



number allowed in 1977."

"Agreements don't erode with time", Knockwood added, referring to the aboriginal education document signed between native leaders and the government, which allowed students 384 weeks to earn their degree.

There are 65 native students presently enrolled at Dalhousie. Knockwood and Meuse say the government proposals over the past ten years consist only of financial cuts in every area for native students. They argue this can only mean an inevitable

reduction in native students enrolling at Dalhousie and in universities across Canada.

"We see this as more threats to our Aboriginal right to education", says Meuse, "we have to start fighting now for the Aboriginal future."

The symposium Saturday and Sunday at Henson College is expected to bring in both Aboriginal students and leaders from across the Atlantic provinces to form a strategy to deal with these concerns.

## Student strike peters out at Montreal's UQAM

MONTREAL (CUP) — Striking Universite de Quebec a Montreal students were back in class November 17, but 2000 students across town at l'Universite de Montreal say they won't give in.

The province's student coalition, l'Association nationale des etudiantes et etudiants du Quebec (ANEQQ) called off a general strike November 13, saying it was a "strategic pause." A three-day strike in October at 32 colleges representing 100,000 students dwindled November 2 to an indefinite walk-out of 54,000 students and 20 colleges and universities.

Arts, literature education and social science students at UQAM refused to extend the two-week strike for loans and bursaries reform by three days at a general assembly.

But sociology, social work and theology students at U de M are still on strike. Criminology students are expected to vote to strike soon.

Anthropology students, who have been picketing since

November 2, suspended their strike for a week while students drop courses and write mid-term exams.

Universite de Montreal anthropology student Fernanda Claudio said she was disappointed that UQAM students were going back to class.

"People (at U de M) will feel a little bit betrayed by this," she said, "We felt a certain solidarity with UQAM, but we're not going to give up."

UQAM students were concerned mostly with the next step in their campaign to press education minister Claude Ryan to implement major changes in the loans and bursaries system in time for the next school year. The strikers want part-time students and those living away from home to be eligible for student aid.

"The battle is finished, but the war is far from over," said UQAM council communications coordinator Virginie Charette. "Students want a better loans and bursaries system and we're going to get it, by all means."