

editorial

Students Ripped - off

Those of you who are fortunate enough to depend on Student Aid to finance your education need not read the following treatise. However, since most students hardly qualify as "idle rich" it is interesting to note that the government Student Aid Program this year is more likely to deprive students of an education than to assist them in the pursuit of one.

The Nova Scotia Government in all its wisdom has decided that students can live on less money than anyone else in the country and has adjusted its Student Aid Program accordingly. Last year students living out of residence received \$1400 for food and rent but this year they will receive only \$1280 to cover these same expenses for an equal time period. Apparently inflation, which has sent prices skyrocketing for the general populace, is not supposed to influence students' costs at all.

The lower living allowance is not the only change in the Aid Program. Some of you may have forgotten how much you were expected to save last summer but if you thought this year's contribution seemed higher you weren't wrong. Students are expected to contribute 20% more to their education this year than in the past. Of course jobs were no easier to come by this summer, if anything they were much scarcer, and the average student summer wage has not been increased by 20%, but somehow the government figured that students could find extra money somewhere.

The new program was actually worse at the beginning of the summer than it is at present. The cutbacks in Student Aid were noticed by many student leaders early in June. At that time they started a campaign to have some changes made. It was discovered by government officials (interestingly enough shortly after the student campaign began) that through an "oversight" on someone's part students were not being granted a lunch allowance. This "oversight" was corrected and students living out of residence were granted an extra \$160 for a year's lunches.

In late August the government announced it was putting another \$3 million into the Student Aid Program. Now, before you start to accuse us of being malcontents or some such thing, for thinking the government less than generous or even less than honest about the extra \$3 million, we'll explain a few facts about all that lovely money.

To begin with \$1 million is federal money loan, not Nova Scotia bursary money, and the Provincial government merely distributes it. Last March the Federal government decided to increase all Canada Student Loans by \$400 to compensate for inflation. However, because of the N.S. Student Aid assessment methods few, if any, Nova Scotians would ever be able to prove enough need to get the extra federal money. One of the August changes in the program was to lower parental contributions so it will now be possible for some Nova Scotian students to obtain a higher federal loan.

The other \$2 million is Provincial money but it is money that was originally allocated by the Nova Scotia Legislature to Student Aid. The Legislature passed a \$6.1 million budget for Student Aid last year. The government then decided it would cut back on aid to students and Cabinet intended to reallocate \$2 of the \$6 million. One of the things students campaigned for this summer was for the government to spend the full \$6.1 million allocated by the Legislature to Student Aid. The government is now going to keep the Student Aid budget at \$6.1 million after much weighty deliberation and "reassessment" of the program.

The program changes made in August will be helpful to those students classified as "dependent" for Student Aid purposes but independent students will still be in a critical financial situation. Students fortunate enough to get into a university residence will also be comparatively well off as the program allows them the full cost of residence - approximately \$1400.

When one considers that tuition, food, rent, and book costs have all increased in the past year while the N.S. Student Aid Program decreased its grants to students we, as students, are inclined to get more than slightly angry. Forcing students to leave school because of inadequate funding is hardly the sign of an enlightened society. The Provincial government should wise up before it's too late. If next year's program is not radically changed the government may find itself bombarded by thousands of extremely angry, unemployed, ex-students.

letters



To the Gazette:

On a recent Sunday afternoon while holed up in my damp little closet of a room watching my favorite mid-day cartoon series a couple of incredibly obnoxious commercials snapped my blissful reverie. These were not just your usual tasteless ads but ads which were the height of condescension (on a cartoon programme yet!). First Andy Granatelli starts on this gravel-talking, fast-paced blurb for STP oil treatment. The background music to his high-pitched commentary is something akin to the Battle Hymn of the Republic with Granatelli mouthing "Yes, we do have the best oil here in this great country of ours . . ." and "... but even with our great oil we still need STP..." Whose great country and whose great oil is Granatelli cheering for? Why, it's Canada's!

The second offending ad was the Shell oil ad. Much more subtle and a touch more refined, the Shell ad amounts to the same thing as the STP ad. It preaches energy conservation to that our great

supplies of oil will last longer. While the STP ad only lies about which side of the border it is really from, the Shell ad tries to convince us that by slowing down we shall preserve our resources - hah! There is no doubt that we save gas by driving slower, but, and this is the punchline, the gas that we do save is then shipped to the U.S. at a much higher price. You see, all excess gas production is shipped to the U.S. and not at domestic prices.

Save me from passionate plays on nationalism.

Sincerely
Eric Smith

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