

continued from page 8

etc.). Some progress has been made, but the D.F.A. feels that it is not enough. The vote last week confirms this, but before a strike could take place, there are a number of intermediary steps which must come first.

Both sides are to return to the bargaining table. The negotiations will continue until a settlement is reached, or until talks break down. If the latter occurs, a conciliator will be appointed who will look at both sides of the case, and who will perhaps make some recommendations. After the conciliator's report is presented to both sides, the D.F.A. will be in a legal strike position.

Thus far, the Student Union has not supported either side in this dispute, as we do not wish to alienate one side or the other. What we do want to see is a settlement that is both fair and acceptable to both parties. We have met with representatives from the D.F.A. and the Board, who have outlined their respective positions to us. What we're most concerned about, naturally enough, is how a strike could affect students. Needless to say, we don't want to see anything happen which could jeopardize our education. Throughout the coming weeks, we will be looking at the effect of various scenarios: what would happen if the D.F.A. were to strike during exam week? During midterms? At the end of the year? If they were to have a rotating strike, i.e. different faculties on different days? These are the kinds of things that we may be looking

at, and in the interim we will continue to consult with both sides. Also, we must consider what avenues are available to us as students.

But we're also concerned about the negotiations themselves. They raise questions which are important to us as students. How much money do our professors make? How much should they be making? How do their salaries compare with other institutions in the province and across the country? How will the outcome of these negotiations affect the quality of our education? There's an element of justice here that we cannot afford to ignore.

Regardless of what happens, the Student Union will be looking out for the best interests of the students. We don't want to see anything happen which could be detrimental to us, and we also want both sides to treat each other fairly. We are, after all, a university, and we belong to the same community. We don't want to see a strike any more than the D.F.A. or the Board, but we're in an awkward position, because we're the ones who are hanging in the balance. Our education is too important for that. What do you think? Let us know what your concerns are.

And if any Faculty or Board member is reading this, we urge you to reach a settlement as soon as possible. There's 10,000 of us out here who'd like to see you get it together, so that we can live in peace and harmony.

Respectfully, Alex Gigeroff,
President, D.S.U.

British students also victim of cuts

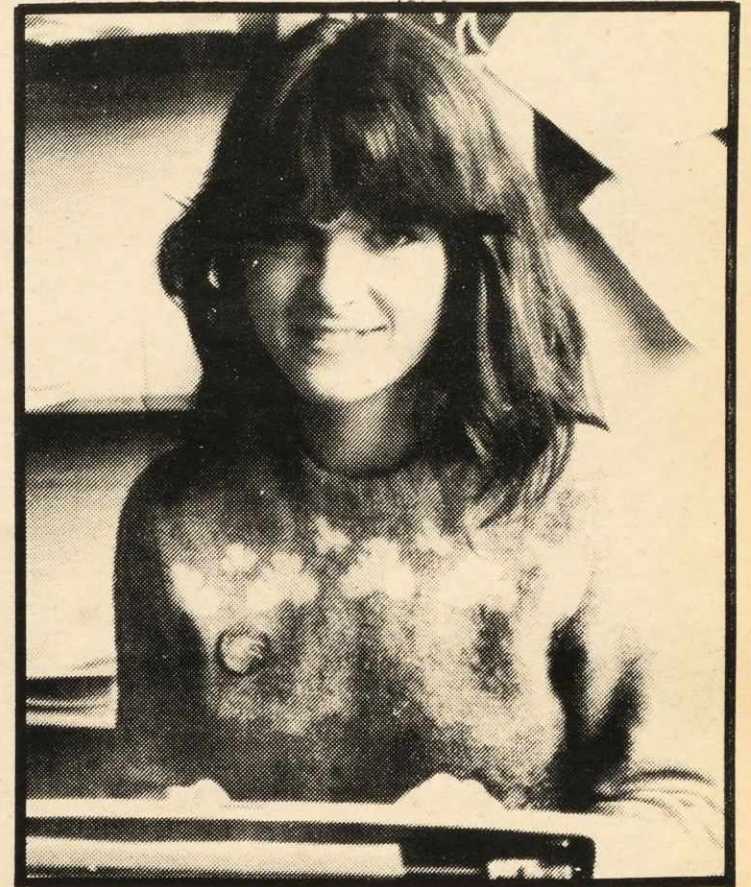
By BILL MITCHELL

Canadian students are not alone in their problems with government cutbacks to education, and decreased accessibility to post-secondary education.

One country where the situation is worse is Great Britain. There the problem is similar to Canada's: under-funding to the universities, and lack of student funds. The major difference is in degree.

In 1981, as part of the Thatcher government's programme of spending cuts, the university system was savaged. The numbers of students at some universities dropped by the hundreds in certain cases. Stirling University in Scotland had its first-year enrolment reduced by 27 percent.

"The university's response to the cuts [in funding] has been to freeze all academic and non-academic posts, a reduction in services for students, such as the Medical Centre, Accommodation and Careers and Appointments service," said Liz Wil-



Liz Wilson, the 1983/84 external affairs officer of Stirling's Student Association.

liams, 1983-84 External Affairs Officer for the Student Association of the University of Stirling. "Alongside the quantifiable effect, there has been a threat of compulsory redundancies and the closing of departments," she added.

At the same time elitist universities like Oxford and Cambridge had expanded.

The British university system is more state-controlled than in Canada. For a university to exist in Great Britain, it must have a Royal Charter. Stirling University was one of the latest to gain a charter, in 1967.

The universities gain their funding through a government agency, continued on page 18

Choice and representation keys of democracy

Two key components to any true democracy are choice and representation. It is a folly to suggest that elections themselves achieve democracy.

In the Soviet Union they do have elections despite the fact that they are hardly looked upon as one of the great democratic republics. The elections are a mere reaffirmation of support for the party candidates, but they do nonetheless go through the motions of the electoral process.

In Nova Scotia we face an election Nov. 6, but to what extent does the process we are about to go through differ from that of the Soviets?

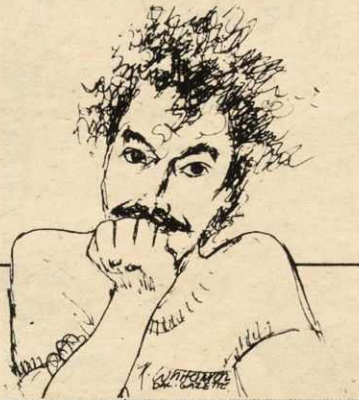
On the surface it does appear as if we do have a choice of candidates, rather than one official party candidate. But to what extent do these candidates differ in their approach to government, and how many are realistically looked upon as serious contenders in the electoral race?

The Soviets have one advantage when going to the polls—they at least have a clear idea of what they are voting for. The communist party has a clearly defined set of goals and policies which are understood by its citizenry. In our upcoming election, how much do we really know about the plans of the two main contending parties for political office—the Liberals and the Conservatives?

So far we have heard very little to differentiate the two.

Instead of carefully outlining both short and long-term planning for their vision of Nova Scotia's future, the Buchanan Tories tell us how great things are and hint things will continue to get better. Of course the obvious response is

RICK JANSON



that things are far from great, and their crystal ball lacks any substantial outline on how things are going to improve. We are expected to buy their slogans, not their policies.

The headlines the Liberals are grabbing are not so much about direction and planning, as much as little critiques about how the provincial government handles given situations.

To what extent does their anger over the purchasing of a helicopter to patrol hydro lines and the controversy over PC MLA Malcom Mackay's travel expenses affect ordinary Nova Scotians? What are their bright plans to put Nova Scotians back to work, restore the economy, and create a more humanistic environment?

As an opposition, the Cameron Liberals have been an absolute failure. One can only assume their silence over the years has been a

sign of consent with the status quo. The NDP—with one member in the legislative assembly—has proved to be a much more effective opposition than their Liberal counterparts. But then again, nobody is suggesting the NDP are serious contenders for power in this election. They acknowledge themselves that winning the election is currently beyond their capacity.

That leaves us with a choice between two parties who have little by which to differentiate themselves politically. When we go to the polls, we can only pick out our favorite personalities, for there are no real policy alternatives for Nova Scotians who are dissatisfied with the status-quo.

If the Soviets were to offer two Communist parties to choose from, would it make them any more democratic? Would it really expand their opportunity for real choice? Of course not. Is our choice between Tweedle-Dum Buchanan

and Tweedle-Dee Cameron a real one? Not really.

So what about all the other parties?

Our political system has shown itself to be incredibly resistant to political alternatives. Since confederation we have seen the creation of only one new major party nationally—and that party has yet to obtain power federally. Provincially, Quebec has shown itself to be the most diversified in its political experimentation, and the Atlantic provinces to be among the least.

Let's face it, the established parties have everything going for them—including the heavy backing of capitalist institutions that would like to maintain and expand their position vis-a-vis public policy. From a position of power and tradition, established political parties have more opportunities to present their cases to the public. They can manipulate publics through the timing of elections, the spending of the public purse and the control of news and information. These are huge advantages for any other party to overcome.

The parliamentary system itself is incredibly fraught with inequities. The gerrymandering of ridings has traditionally kept the working-class and the poor from obtaining proper representation. The victim of gerrymandering is more often than not the NDP.

Our elections have a winner-take-all approach to politics. Those who vote with the majority get

representation, those who vote alternatively don't. The end result is that large numbers of Canadians become politically disenfranchised.

Despite the fact that 18 percent of Nova Scotians voted for the NDP in the last provincial election, less than two percent of representatives in the legislative assembly are of that party. What happened to the representation the other 16 percent of Nova Scotians voted for? The NDP picked up a similar percentage of votes provincially in the last federal election and received no representation from it. If we had a properly representative system, wouldn't the NDP have two seats federally and 10 seats provincially in Nova Scotia?

When considering the implications a true representative government would have on the political map of Canada, it is no wonder electoral reform is a dead issue among the Grits and Tories. The recent federal Tory landslide—the largest in Canadian history—was won with only 50 percent of the popular vote. The Mulroney Tories would have been lucky to barely get away with a majority government had true representation been implemented.

We need real electoral reform in this country. We need political parties that will clearly articulate their vision of the future. We need greater participation of the Canadian public in the process of government. Until then we are just kidding ourselves in this game we call democracy. □