

## One proposal put the ceiling at

# \$1900 . . . . .

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provides.

This decision-making vacuum was inevitably filled by a consortium of federal-provincial bureaucracies. They, rather than the politicians, have ended up quietly making vital social policy decisions about student aid.

"There is no way to inform or accomodate public opinion in the decision making process"

Deep in the bowels of the federal finance department is the Guaranteed Loans Administration, which deals with student loans.

According to GLA Chief F.C. Passy, the interest of his unit in the CSLP extends to the administrative areas of "the repayment phase of the plan" and matters related to "lenders, repayment or collection." Larger student aid policy concerns, he says, are dealt with elsewhere.

From this it could be assumed that Passy and the members of his department are simply program administrators, responding to policy directives formulated by the politicians in consultation with other parties.

But Passy is also chairman of an almost clandestine group of federal and provincial bureaucrats called the Canada Student Loan Plenary Group. Passy says this group's function is to develop "standard administrative criteria" to ensure that students in each province receive "the same treatment."

As chairman, he says his job consists of "obtaining a consensus among provincial views in order to arrive at recommendations (for the finance minister) and to ensure the intent of federal legislation is maintained."

It is difficult to discover whether Passy's plenary group does deal only with procedure and administrative matters, or whether it actually makes decisions of a substantive policy nature. This information is unobtainable because the body meets in closed sessions and releases no minutes or records except for one—the Canada Student Loans Plan Administrative Criteria.

The first section, entitled "Basic Principles" begins: "The responsibility for the cost of post-secondary education to the individual student remains primarily with the parent (guardian or immediate family) and/or the student."

This 'basic principle' is clearly not a mere administrative criterion. Rather, it is a statement of social policy which has been frequently challenged by various groups seeking a better student aid program. It is not contained in the Act or in the Regulations passed by government.

It is an example of special policy formulation masquerading as mere administrative problem solving, undertaken by the civil service with the passive approval of the elected legislators.

Other than that one published document nothing is known of other policy decisions the Plenary might make. But a document recently leaked from another government body dealing with the student aid question provides us with a report of what was decided in its 1974 meeting.

Included in the report were references to aid for part-time students, raising of the student loan ceiling to \$1900 per year (likely to happen in 1976-77), calculation of the parental contribution tables, and hence a working definition of what constitutes "need."

Although there is no expected increase in the number of student enrolling in the upcoming years, the report said that "the actual outlay by the federal government in terms of CSL would increase sharply in 1975-76 and even more so in succeeding years." This can only mean a greater debt upon graduation for students if the loans are increased.

As chairman of the plenary, Passy takes the "provincial consensus" back to John Turner, for consideration and approval.

## Slight overreaction

# Many guards, no protest

Reprinted from the Feb. 13 Ottawa Citizen

Tight security surrounded the government conference centre today as provincial and federal officials met to discuss changes in student aid and loan plans.

City police and federal commissionaires sealed all entrances to the building in anticipation of a student demonstration which did not materialize and was never planned.

The heavy security was a reaction to an announcement by the National Union of Students Wednesday that they would try to participate in the talks. NUS spokesmen were surprised this morning by the apparent overreaction to their statement. Their attempted participation consisted of sending two students with a letter asking admission.

"All we were doing was making a formal request for student input to the discussion, and saying we would be available for consultation," said a NUS spokesman.

The closed meeting is one of a series of talks by provincial education officials and representatives of the secretary of state's post-secondary education support branch.

The task force is to come forward with proposals to improve and equalize student grant and loan schemes across Canada. Student leaders want a voice in determining the new arrangements. They are worried that the task force proposals might include and increased share of tuition costs for students.

They also want a new age of independence for students and reduction of parental and summer employment contributions now required for student aid.

Spokesman for the secretary of state's office said today that the talks at the moment are strictly "interprovincial business and this is simply a meeting of officials. Any recommendations by the officials will have to be referred to the political level."



PUT THAT LIGHT OUT! THIS STUFF'S INFLAMMABLE

The critical point isn't that Turner takes advice from federal and provincial bureaucrats on how to run the CSLP, but that there are no other groups which share in this mandate. There exists no vehicle by which concerned parties can learn of, let alone comment on, proposed policy changes.

And even when the whole plan is being "modified" through administrative declaration into a scheme resulting in graduates having their income drained for years, there is no way to inform or accomodate public opinion in the decision-making process.

"To the extent that federal support enables institutions to hold down tuition fees, many relatively well-off students might be unjustifiably subsidized"

The other federal department playing a role in student aid is the Educational Support Branch of the Secretary of State.

According to Passy, it concerns itself with "matters of broader student aid significance." As far as the CSLP itself is concerned, this branch keeps a watchful eye on whether the plan is meeting its intended objectives.

Secretary of State Hugh Faulkner claims it isn't. He told an audience of university administrators last November that the plan was created to provide "a mechanism capable of correcting some of the inter-regional and inter-personal inequities in educational opportunities which would otherwise prevail."

In other words the CSLP was to provide poor people and those in poorer regions an opportunity for education similar to those who were rich, or from a rich region.

But because there are still pockets of disadvantaged individuals who don't make it to university, Faulkner feels the CSLP has not worked.

"It is not enough to compare the socio-economic and regional composition of the student body with the composition of the total population when we know full well there remain disadvantaged individuals who belong to groups which tend to receive the least amounts of education," he said.

According to the Secretary of State, the continued existence of social inequality in post-secondary educational opportunities must cause us to take a "sober" look at the whole CSLP. It isn't enough that the student aid system has a proven ability to make progress in lessening class and regional barriers in Canadian society; it has failed to eliminate such inequality and this is not good enough for Faulkner and the "Just Society" envisaged by his government.

For this reason Faulkner would have us "begin to examine the financial needs of students in light of what is being done for other groups in terms of income maintenance, and treat this question...as a genuine social security pre-employment issue."

In other words, if students and their parents qualify for welfare assistance then so be it. But for the vast majority of middle income students social justice

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