

EDITORIAL

Scary funding story

The federal government is singling out universities and colleges in a "ghost of six-and-five" bill scheduled soon for third reading. Bill C-12 proposes to limit funding for post-secondary education, and the government is defending the bill the way McDonald's once defended its McRib's. The McFeds must know they have a poor product, yet they won't admit it.

Bill C-12 will limit federal transfers to the provinces to six per cent in 1983-84, and to five per cent in 1984-85. This means the current federal-provincial agreement for funding post-secondary education will be amended so the feds will cut \$118 million this year and \$260 million next year.

It would make sense to apply the six-and-five policy if the government were serious about attacking the deficit, but the isolated cuts have a negligible effect on reducing the deficit.

Enrolment at the U of A jumped nine per cent this year, enrolment across Canada is up an average of five per cent, and 675,000 Canadian youth between the ages of 15 and 24 are jobless. The post-secondary system can not handle a severe cutback. Bill C-12 will affect people who can least afford to bear the burden.

The Liberals say they are concerned about youth and created a Ministry of State for Youth to "instill a sense of hope in young people."

The cost of creating the junior ministry could have been money better spent in providing thousands of qualified students with an education.

Bill C-12 is now before the Standing Committee on Finance, Trade, and Economic Affairs. The New Democratic Party proposed three changes to Bill C-12. Their post-secondary education critic, Pauline Jewett, asked the government to establish an emergency fund and not to abandon the goal of universal accessibility to education.

Jewett told the Standing Committee reviewing the bill to look at these amendments:

1. To remove the six-and-five limitations of funding for universities and colleges;
2. To remove any retroactive references in the bill (the government has already cut \$118 million from the transfer payments for 1983-84);
3. To ensure the federal transfer payments go to education and not to other sectors.

Tightened university entrance requirements and increased tuition fees point to the need to establish a national task force to combat the crisis in post-secondary education. The task force would consist of the two levels of government, university representatives, students, and faculty members.

The budget speech of Feb. 15 announced the formal end of the six-and-five restraint policy. "Knowing what has been happening and knowing how much the provincial governments have eroded the system, why did the federal government not then immediately decide on the six-and-five and start working on a new funding formula with the provinces and the institutions?" asked Jewett in a House of Commons debate.

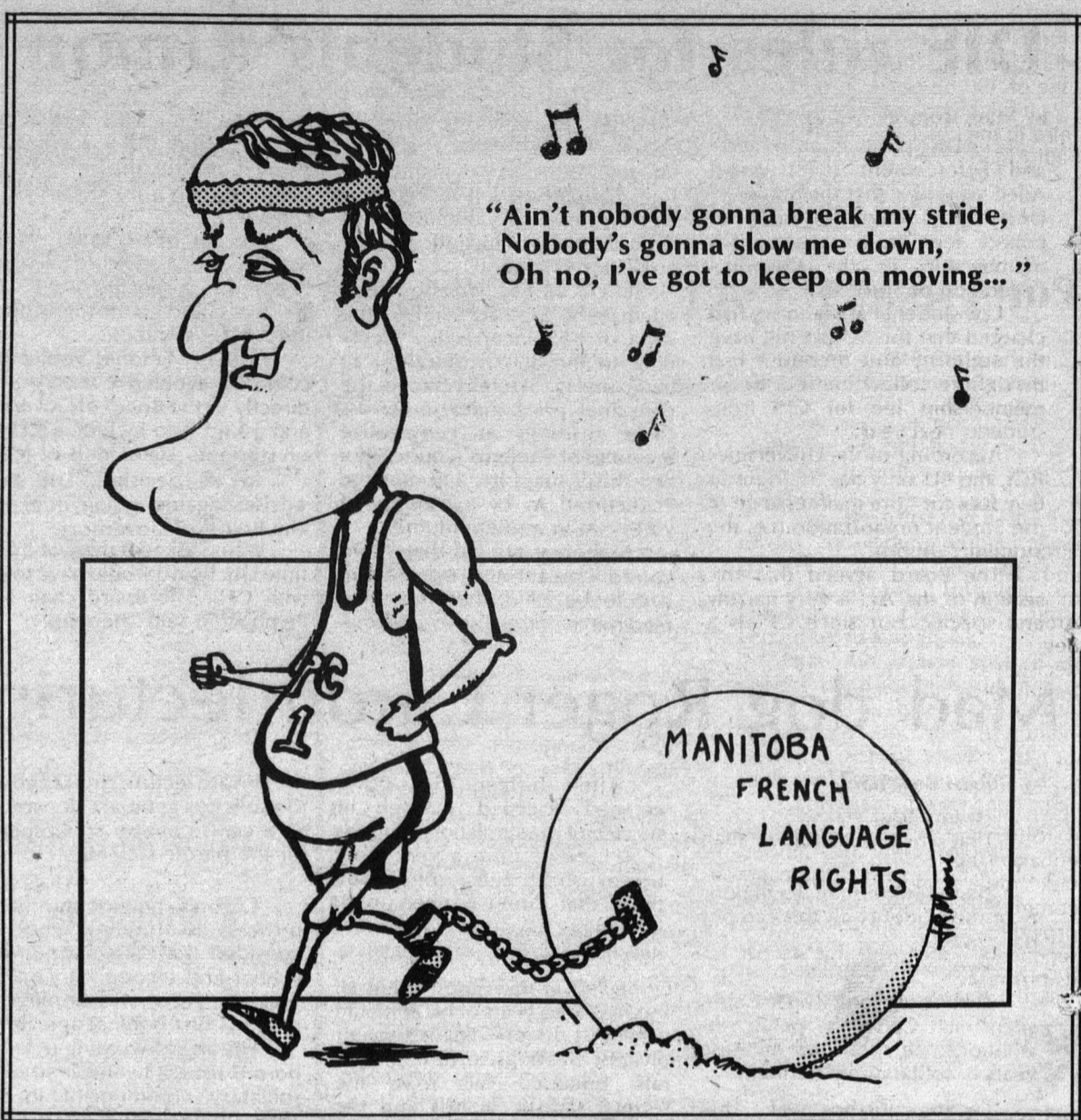
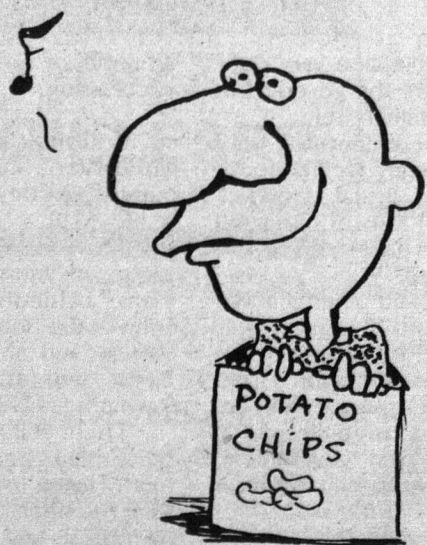
"In some ways I do not blame the federal government. It saw that the provincial governments were not passing on the increases that were granted to them under the Fiscal Arrangements Act," said Jewett.

Indeed, the Alberta Tories have been spiritless throughout the current stalemate over the Established Programs Financing agreement.

Meanwhile, both levels of government are rewriting the meaning of accessibility. And with Bill C-12, the federal government is losing face sticking with an indefensible bill. What ever happened to its commitment to the principle of accessibility?

"It's like being a little pregnant. You either maintain the principle of accessibility or you do not. When you qualify it by saying you will maintain it as much as possible, you are really saying you will not maintain it."

Brent Jang



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Public consumption

As John Algard points out in his March 20 Gateway editorial, what purpose is served if knowledge is not put to use? Academic researchers and scientists have traditionally justified their contribution to society as increasing knowledge about certain problems, from which greater understanding and solutions will supposedly follow. But of what utilitarian good is this knowledge if it is never transmitted to the general public? If it remains in small, academic circles?

However, I don't think increased private funding, hence greater university autonomy and more effective tenure, is a realistic proposal for two reasons. First, increased funding, whether government or private, is difficult to come by because the majority of the people are not totally convinced of the value of research - probably for the reasons given in the editorial: The results are not highly visible, and often are perceived as not making a difference one way or another anyway. Second, I don't think it is realistic to expect academics to transmit the results of their research only because some would not be interested in such efforts and secondly the professional language would be unreadable to most.

A more effective solution would be publication of a periodical specifically for the general public, aligned with the university, and possibly written by students (who are in an ideal position to act as mediators between academics and the general public) or other concerned people. The subject matter would be both empirical and theoretical research, which would serve to raise public con-

sciousness on controversial issues. "But the general public isn't interested, and wouldn't read it." True, but these ingrained attitudes can be changed through marketing and mass media a demand for such a periodical could be created.

Kevin Dardin
Arts IV

Risky scrip business

Peter James Blake:

Your letter to the Gateway Editor on Tuesday, March 20 constitutes libel. While I respect your right to disagree with what I do, I do wish that you would resort to logic, and not libel, to oppose me.

You imply that I bought at 50 per cent and sold at 80 per cent at the same time. While it is true that I was able to purchase a small amount of SCRIP at 50 per cent, the average price that I paid was 60 per cent. You imply that everything I sold was sold at 80 per cent. Not true. The 80 per cent charge was for amounts less than \$10.00, while larger amounts went for less, down to 65 per cent on \$100.00. As a result, my average selling price was 70 per cent. My total profit was \$1,500.00 (and yes, I did declare it on my income tax return).

I do not understand why you assume that making a profit is evil. I provided a service to the students who had excess SCRIP by taking my time to sell it for them. You would not expect to work for free, and neither do I. Wages are paid from profits. Also, I had my own money invested in the business at reasonably high risk. If one has money invested in a company, one expects dividends. You doubtless have already learned this in your four years in Commerce.



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great drugs!
-Lord Algard