

Gov't committee lays out part of a 20-year economic plan

17 recommendations made to Liberals on controversial MAI treaty

BY JEREMY NELSON

(The Manitoban) — A high-level government committee has released a report that could play a major role in shaping the next 20 years of Canadian economic and social policy.

The report, authored by a subcommittee of the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, contains 17 recommendations detailing how the Liberal government should proceed in negotiating the controversial Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI).

The MAI is an international economic treaty that Canada and 28 other industrialized nations plan to sign this May.

Critics of the agreement say it will do massive damage to the Canadian way of life by allowing foreign corporations to gain unlimited ownership of Canadian resources and by giving the same corporations the right to sue the Canadian government if it passes laws harmful to their business.

The subcommittee report is the result of nine days of MAI hearings, which took place in Ottawa last November.

Among other things, the report recommends that the Liberal government should broaden MAI consultations and should consider undertaking a full impact analysis detailing the effects the MAI could have on Canada's environment, culture, economy and society in general.

Although the report is only a few weeks old, some of the 144 presenters have already expressed disgust with the report and with the hearings in general, alleging that they were little more than an exercise in public-relations.

"It's a sound idea to have hearings, but the execution was a sham," said Carleton University student Terry Cottam, a founder of the national group MAI-Not.

"They didn't publicize [the hearings], they announced them at the last minute, they kept changing the times for presentations and they held them only in Ottawa."

Bill Blaikie, international trade critic for the New Democratic Party, agrees.

"None of the recommendations have anything to do with putting enforceable rules in the MAI itself," Blaikie said.

"Why does the government feel so confident about pursuing an agreement that is so lopsided in favour of investors? They never really answered that question."

As drafted, the MAI would prevent the government from creating any new labour, environmental and cultural regulations for the next 20 years, if those laws were deemed to be harmful to the business of a domestic or foreign investor.

The subcommittee recommended that the negotiating team push for labour, environmental and cultural protection to be inserted into the MAI itself, but didn't outline what Canada should do if these protections are not met.

Blaikie says that is unacceptable. "[With the MAI] we would have a perverse moral hierarchy where investors get to have their rights enshrined, protected and enforced, and the rest of us just get strong language," he said.

Bob Speller, chair of the subcommittee, disagrees with the criticisms of the report, saying that it is a fair representation of the views of the subcommittee, which consisted of five Liberal MPs and one MP from each other recognized party.

"The hearings sent a message to

the government that all the parties were concerned about the negotiations," Speller, a Liberal MP, said.

"Overall, our report reflected what the majority of people were saying."

But both the Reform Party and NDP disagreed with the final report, submitting their own reports on the hearings process.

Speller says these additional reports were inaccurately polarised.

"They were two extreme, opposing views, and the majority of the people on the committee, and probably the majority of people who

presented, were somewhere in the middle."

Blaikie, who sat on the subcommittee, disagrees. He says that the majority of the presenters were opposed to the treaty in one way or another.

"Who are the extremists here?" Blaikie asked. "To me, the extremists are the people who think that everything should be left to the whims of the marketplace."

Speller admits there were problems with the way the MAI has been handled to date, and it was for that reason that the subcommittee

recommended that the government undertake an open and transparent negotiation process on future matters of such widespread importance as the MAI.

But both Cottam and Blaikie say that even a wider consultation process would only benefit Canadians if the government was willing to be more accountable to the public.

"The government [needs to] hear our questions and answer us, and not the other way around," Cottam said. "The hearings went back to front...and that's not democracy."

Wrongfully convicted man says law students should keep open mind

BY ANDY VAINIO

WINDSOR (CUP) — Guy Paul Morin says he hopes law students can learn from the 11 years he spent trying to clear his name of a murder he didn't commit.

"Hopefully they understand how justice could go wrong and realize that it's not a perfect system by far and [they try to] make it a better one by being fair when they get involved with the system," Morin said after speaking with University of Windsor law and criminology students last month.

Morin's ordeal with a justice system gone sadly awry began in

1984 when he was charged with murdering his 9-year-old neighbour Christine Jessop.

The Queensville, Ontario man was tried and acquitted of the charges in 1986, but was retried and convicted in 1992. After spending a total of a year-and-a-half in jail and a quarter of a million dollars on legal bills, he was exonerated through DNA testing in 1995.

A public inquiry into Morin's wrongful conviction has brought to light admissions from two hair and fibre analysts who worked on his case at Toronto's Centre for Forensic Science that they were aware since 1985 that the physical evidence used to convict him was contaminated. The Crown's case

against Morin hinged on fibres found in his car and on Jessop's clothing.

"To know that [contamination] took place is a very scary thing," Morin told the students.

The centre will be re-examining 10 years worth of evidence used in other cases as a result of the revelations.

When asked what advice he would give to students studying law, Morin joked, "Never be a lawyer is what I say."

But he commented afterwards that it was important for those who go into the legal profession to be fair.

"Not all people who are brought into court as an accused are guilty...being open minded in the

whole process is the most important thing," he said.

Morin told the students that he isn't bitter, despite everything that he went through.

"If there's a little good [that came out of it], that's good enough for me," he said. "I'm not bitter because I see that some people tried to help out the proper flow of justice."

Morin announced that this was going to be his last public appearance. A

music lover, he says he plans to become a piano tuner. But for now, the focus for him is moving on.

"I want to close the chapter on this dark moment of my life, if that is possible. I think it is."

UBC med prof admits assaulting secretary

BY DALIAH MERZABAN AND DOUGLAS QUAN

VANCOUVER (CUP) — A University of British Columbia medical professor is under investigation by the College of Physicians and Surgeons after pleading guilty to common assault.

David Levitt, 64, was charged with sexual assault last spring after June

Williamson, a secretary at his medical office, complained to police that he tried to kiss her and touch her breast.

She also complained that at an office party he repeatedly propositioned her to have intercourse and often put his hand on her hip or shoulder.

Although Levitt was charged with sexual assault he pleaded guilty Jan. 5 in B.C. Provincial Court to common

assault. He was given a sentence of 18 months probation.

Williamson, 24, works for Alan Weiss, a physician who shares an office with Levitt.

She says she is satisfied with Levitt's sentence.

"I feel fine about it. I didn't want it to be majorly bad because it was a fairly minor thing in comparison to a lot of

things that have happened [in society]," she said.

"[I have] no animosity towards him at all," Williamson added. "It was just a stupid moment and he's got some problems. I just wanted to make sure that he got help. That was the big thing."

Levitt is currently undergoing counselling.

Madame Justice Godfrey, the judge presiding over Levitt's trial, told the court his record will be wiped clean of the matter if he meets the conditions of his probation.

Levitt's lawyer, T.L. Robertson, says his client's sentence is appropriate.

"He will be formally reprimanded, and that reprimand will be published to the media and to the profession, which is likely a great or greater punishment to him than the criminal consequences," he said.

And Levitt could face further consequences for his actions.

A hearing before the College of Physicians and Surgeons, which oversees the activities of doctors in B.C., will decide Levitt's fate in the organization.

David Vanandel, deputy registrar of the regulatory body, says the College will decide whether to discipline Levitt, including ordering him to undertake counselling or suspending him from the College.

According to the court transcript, Levitt plans to continue his job at UBC and at his practice in order to support his two daughters, 15 and 17. This term he is teaching a class on clinical diagnosis at the university.

University officials could not be reached to comment on whether Levitt will face any disciplinary action.

The finer points of library fines

BY MICHAEL DOBIE

MONTREAL (CUP) — University libraries are adopting an attitude of *caveat emptor* — buyer beware for those of you who flunked Latin — towards library fines.

Concordia journalism student Shaun Finn paid \$100 in overdue fines for hanging on to some books past their due date.

"It was a harrowing experience. I totally forgot," he said.

"I took out a large number of books, they got lost in my room under some clothes and I forgot until I got a late notice. I got a bill for lost charges [for] over \$500. I was totally freaked out. I was in dread of my life."

Drama aside, Finn is just one of many university students across Canada who forget to return their books on time. But some don't even forget — they keep their books on purpose.

"Some students prefer to pay fines rather than bring the books back," said Irene Sendek, who works for the Concordia University library. She says students essentially buy books for the

term by hanging on to them and paying the maximum fine when the course is over.

Sendek says that many universities unwittingly encourage this by putting a cap on fines — usually between \$20 and \$30 — lower than the replacement cost of the book.

The daily late charge on an overdue university library book varies from coast to coast.

Dalhousie's Killam Library charges 25 cents a day per late item for books in normal circulation, and 25 cents an hour for items on reserve.

The fines, implemented seven years ago, encourage the return of books on time, says Dalhousie librarian Sandra Dwyer.

"There's been a better return rate and things are more available," she said.

Dwyer's testimony supports the popular "fines-as-deterrent-to-late-returns" theory.

This theory also holds out West. At UBC and Simon Fraser University (SFU) students are charged \$1 a day for overdue books.

"There used to be fewer students and

bigger budgets. We could get away with [late returns]," Polson said. "[Then] budgets were cut, and enrollment went up. We had an availability problem."

But it's a problem that the high fines now seem to be solving. After the introduction of the increased fine, the number of late returns at SFU eventually diminished.

But there are some who are skeptical about the "fines-as-deterrent-to-late-returns" theory, such as Concordia's Sendek.

"Students, in spite of information to the contrary, have money to pay fines," she argues. "They prefer to pay fines rather than bring books back."

In the meantime, if you do happen to "forget" those books under that pile of laundry in the corner, you can always try negotiating with your friendly librarian. They're human, after all.

Finn offered to wash the librarian's car to avoid paying his fine, but to no avail. In order to graduate, he had to pony up the dough.

"I realised it was futile to resist," he said.