

Free trade pact threatens education

If you are a student currently enrolled in a Canadian university, the education you have received to date may be of the highest quality Canada will ever be able to offer. If the Conservatives win the election in November — and it seems likely that they will — post-secondary education in Canada will probably cost more, and it certainly will not improve.

Mr. Mulroney's drive to build a 'prosperous' Canada through free trade has blinded him to the importance of maintaining an educational infrastructure which can both support that prosperity and ensure its continued growth. As a result of his push for U.S. spending in Canada, education has been placed in the competitive arena and Canadians will lose out.

Under chapter 13 of the Free Trade Agreement (FTA), Canada and the U.S. "will actively strive to achieve as quickly as possible, the multi-lateral liberalization of

international government procurement policies". This means that under the agreement American universities can compete for Canadian research funds which would otherwise have been guaranteed to Canadian universities.

In 1986 Johns Hopkins University in the U.S. received the equivalent of \$450 million Cdn., which is approximately \$100 million Cdn. less than what the Canadian government distributed amongst all its research institutes in the same year. The larger distribution of research funds in the U.S. has given them a clear technological advantage.

Theoretically, under the FTA neither party may favour its own universities in offering a tender or accepting a bid. Because U.S. universities are technologically more advanced than Canadian universities they have a greater chance of being awarded research contracts from the Canadian government. As a result, Canadian universities will have to spend more money

on research if they are to remain competitive. Less money will be spent on teachers and teaching supplies, and students will suffer because of it.

If the PCs continue their movement away from public spending, students will have to spend more money to meet the demands of a deteriorating educational system.

It gets worse. If Canadians accept the FTA by voting Conservative in the November election, it is not likely that Canadian publishing companies will survive the challenge of their larger American counterparts reaping the benefits of an expanding competitive market.

It is quite possible that future generations of students will be

reading textbooks chosen by American 'book tycoons' who have learned that Canadians live in igloos, everybody has the right to bear arms, and for the sake of democracy it is o.k. for the contra rebels to kill thousands of innocent people.

The saddest thing about Mr. Mulroney's Free Trade Agreement is that it promotes its own demise. As our educational sys-

tem deteriorates so does the 'competitiveness' of its graduates and the overall strength of Canada in the competitive marketplace. It does not promote prosperity.

So as you head to the polls in November remember to vote anything but Conservative; it will be the best thing you will ever do for education in Canada.

Michael Thompson

Students suffer from library cutbacks

"A university is nothing more than its collection of books." Universities also in theory are primary establishments of higher learning. The library is the first source for students in all fields to engage in this learning process. Students at Dalhousie go to the library to search and rescue materials in order to write that articulate piece of intelligible stuff. It's that stuff that can determine one's position in life at a later date.

I'm willing, I care, straight A's are fun. The library isn't. Six full-time staff positions in the library no longer exist. Resignations and cuts in funding continue unabatedly to rise, just as hiring continues to decline. And yes, it's bloody evident. At any given time, a glance into the photocopy room will afford a view of red, green and black stacks — stacks of books, left by students after being copied, and awaiting, ever so patiently as books will do, to be reshelfed. While the inanimate papers wait, I also wait, ever more animate as the hours and days pass by.

It's Thursday, 6:00 p.m. A periodical required reading awaits me. The reference book plays elusive. O.K. — someone else is reading it. Friday, 4:00 p.m. Periodical still not where it should be. I check the photocopy room, no luck. I check the reference room. The periodical sits, unchecked, at the end of one table.

This frightens me.

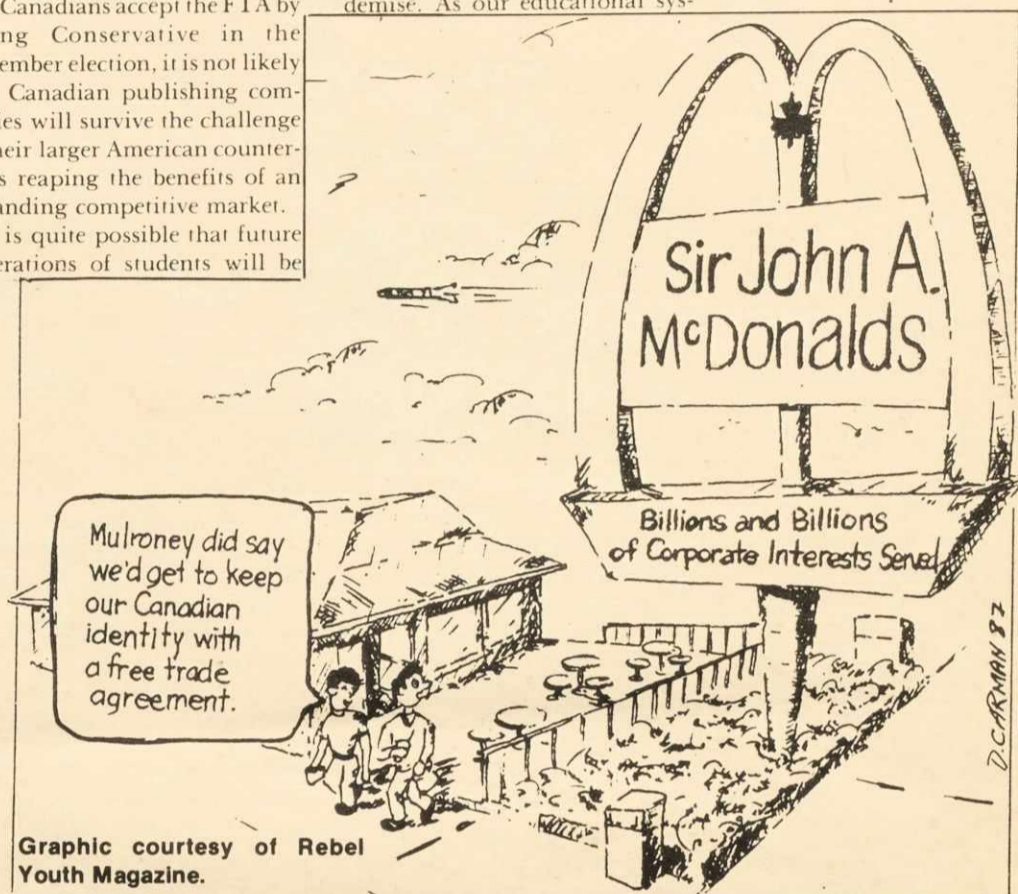
Are we to presume a 24-hour missing link each time a periodi-

cal is taken from a shelf? Priorities for finance are a mess — be they at the hands of the Dalhousie Administration or resting at the feet of the provincial government. Consequently, so is the library. Periodical subscriptions and newer (never mind newest) book publications continue as non-entities. Lack of financial means again is the reason.

I applaud the re-evaluation of the recently reduced library hours and the subsequent return to "normalcy" (the library is again open until 11:00 p.m. five nights a week). That cuts in library hours even occurred should put all on their toes. What's the hidden agenda for 1989? Better yet, look to November, month of midterms and essays. Can the library handle this year's end-of-term overload? I believe we've merely bandaged the festering mess. Look to the strike issue. A "no lay-off" clause written into a new contract with the Dalhousie Staff Association would obviously benefit the library and students. It is, however, the only direct benefit a victorious DSA could offer the library; and just the first step in a series that is imperative for library well-being.

Our library is operating at subsistence level at present, and users are feeling the negative effects. To maintain the library as it is will not be enough. The library needs substantial funds. Library service must be upgraded before it becomes a very large and quite unfunny joke.

Karin Bergen



Graphic courtesy of Rebel Youth Magazine.

OPINION

The political life of Brian

by Michael Asuncion

Alas, it's nearly that time again for the fun boy three of Canadian politics, Brian, John and Ed. As Mr. Mulroney holds a more prominent position in the political theatre, it seemed appropriate to comment upon his track record while in office.

Brian's best subjects seemed to have been international relations and promise-making 101 whereas more effort is needed in his social policies, taxation, the problem of patronage and free trade (Canada-U.S.).

With respect to social policy, Brian's most embarrassing dressing down had to have been that which came about as a result of the idea of partial de-indexing pensions in the first proposed budget. Disenchantment towards this was sufficiently voiced by 63 year old Solange Denis of Ottawa, who scolded the PM one day in June of 1985 outside Parliament. Nine days later, Brian publicly admitted that "...I, we made a mistake (concerning partial de-indexing)..."

Taxation must have been another hotspot for Brian's adversaries as broken promises seem somewhat synonymous with some of the fiscal policy under Brian. In his 1984 platform, Brian promised not to raise personal taxes (for deficit reductions). Interestingly, the average Canadian family now pays about 52 per cent more in personal taxes yet corporations pay about 18 per cent less. Although this alone does not warrant knuckle-rapping, it seems somewhat curious and falls just barely short of suspicious.

Fortunately for Brian, though not all Canadians were devout campfollowers, many across the Big Pond were. Indeed, under Mulroney's government, token economic sanctions against South African Apartheid have far exceeded recent policy actions of distant predecessors. Such action won Brian the applause and support of the United Nations and the Commonwealth excepting Britain, who would have a lot to lose if trade with South Africa decreased via sanctions.

Patronage must be a popular topic around the Opposition campfire. Highlights of Tory patronage under Brian include: the pumping in of \$195 million into the PM's own riding of Manicouagan, most notably the new prison at Port Cartier; the awarding of a \$1 billion maintenance contract for the CF-18 to Canadair of Montreal as opposed to Bristol Aerospace of Winnipeg. Besides the French partiality (Mulroney is from Quebec), there is the fact that the Bristol bid was \$3.5 million cheaper and was judged to be better by an impartial panel. Interestingly, between September 1984 and March 1986 about 45 per cent of federal handouts were sent to Brian's homestead of Quebec.

With respect to free trade, the irony of Brian's position as an instigator is best illustrated by a now amusing 'Brian' quote from June 1983: "This country could not survive with a policy of unfettered free trade." The boy from Baie-Comeau has come a long way indeed.