

"...if Charest thinks he's pulling something on us, he's sadly mistaken."

# Tory brass avoids CFS conference

**OTTAWA (CUP)** — Canada's student leaders failed to win significant political points during recent Parliament Hill meetings with representatives of the three major parties.

More than 100 members of the Canadian Federation of Students, holding a semi-annual general meeting in Ottawa, confronted caucuses of the Liberal, New Democratic and Progressive Conservative parties Nov. 4, but were given little more than warm promises from the opposition and evasive answers from the government.

Carefully planned questions, on issues such as student aid, federal-provincial funding arrangements and student unemployment, were delivered to each caucus, though no time was given for follow-up questions or debate.

While the Liberals and New Democrats fielded near-full caucuses, with respective leaders John Turner and Ed Broadbent in at-

tendance, the Conservatives decided to send only Jean Charest, minister of state for youth.

Charest headed a delegation consisting mostly of backbenchers and bureaucrats. Other ministers with portfolios relevant to students and youth, including secretary of state David Crombie and employment minister Benoit Bouchard, declined CFS invitations to hear student concerns.

"We're a little disappointed that other parties were able to bring out more of their caucuses," CFS chair Tony Macerollo told the Tory caucus.

Charest, who answered most questions, talked mostly about student unemployment rates. Macerollo said Charest's luke-warm answers were riddled with inaccuracies, adding "if Charest thinks he's pulling something on us, he's sadly mistaken."

Responses from the Liberal and NDP caucuses, chaired by post-

secondary critics Roland de Corneille and Lynn McDonald, were marked by enthusiastic yet predictable answers.

"You're preaching to the converted," said McDonald, adding the Mulroney government is better able to fund post-secondary education and research than it claims.

"Don't buy the line we're living beyond our means. We're not," said McDonald. "We spent less on health and education than most (western) countries — Holland, Italy, England, Ireland — countries with much less resources than Canada."

de Corneille, the head of a Liberal task force on post-secondary education due to report to this month's national party convention, said Canadian youth face "a very serious crisis" with high unemployment rates, rising fees, and skyrocketing student aid debt loads.

"More Canadians are seeing that education is not a cost, but an

investment," said de Corneille.

Although opposition MPs were quick to support the federation's causes during caucus meetings, little attention was given to student concerns later in the House of Commons.

During question period, McDonald was the only MP to raise any education-related questions. She asked Crombie if the government is considering a solution to rising debt loads.

"I'll be happy to meet with (anyone) to deal with the situation," Crombie said.

Many CFS delegates found the caucus meetings futile.

"I thought this was the biggest ass-kiss of all," said Chris Spiteri, a student council vice-president at the University of Ottawa.

University of Victoria delegate Keith Piddington described the federation's performance as "very quiet, muted and stodgy".

Piddington said CFS made a poor

attempt at attracting media coverage. "I was looking for something with a bit more spark, a bit more drama, and a bit more fire," he said.

"They're going to wonder back home what we're doing here. I think they're (CFS) afraid of offending anyone," he said.

But Allan Sharp, president of the Canadian Association of University Teachers, which coached students on lobbying techniques, said students should not have expected too much to come from the caucus meetings.

"I don't think debate is an effective lobby tool," he said. "The crucial thing is that students hear the clear disinformation and the lack of knowledge that exists (in the government)."

Macerollo, who was re-elected CFS chair during federation meetings, promised to change the lobby format for next year's meetings.

# U of Lethbridge losing more residence space

**LETHBRIDGE (CUP)** — A University of Lethbridge committee spent \$250,000 on design development proposal that does not budget space for student residence.

The U of L campus, which includes a student residence, administration and faculty offices, student clubs, cafeteria and classrooms, is enclosed in a single building straddling the coolees on the perimeter of metro Lethbridge.

Although the student population has almost doubled in the last five

years, the university has been converting residence space into offices and classrooms. A total of 76 beds have been lost since 1984.

"The first priority of the university is to look after its academic operation. The student residence and other things such as the (student union) building are secondary," says Bob Comstock, the university's vice-president for campus development.

Comstock was commenting on a report by the Program Committee

for the Expansion of Academic Space. The report details staff and administration needs for space as the university grows from the current 3,000 full-time students to a projected 4,500 — but does not include a plan for the construction of new student residence.

"We have no spare space at the university," said Comstock.

"We understand that less residence space means less revenue from residence, but the loss in residence revenues still would be

much less than renting space or buying temporary buildings," he said.

"We don't like to do it but the administration must act upon pressures from various departments that need extra space," he said.

However, Neil Olangevin, a member of the university Residence Council, said one of the university's goals is to provide housing for up to 20 per cent of the full-time student population.

He said a plan to build a new

student residence, which would accommodate 600 married and single students and cost about \$9 million, has not been approved by the provincial government.

The Residence Council is planning an intensive lobby aimed at the Alberta ministry of Advanced Education.

"The plan for a student residence has been approved by all the university's bodies," said Olangevin. "Now it's up to the provincial government."

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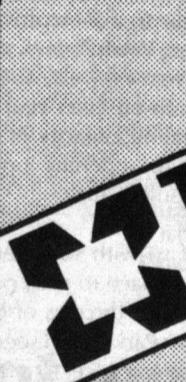
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