

EPF cuts make the news once again

by Thomas Vradenburg, Ottawa

There are conflicting reports about how much post-secondary education funding the federal government intends to cut, however, indications are that non-professional programs - particularly the humanities - will suffer most.

Government funding for colleges and universities is currently handed out under the Established Programs Financing (EPF) Act with no strings attached.

The Parliamentary Task Force on Federal-Provincial relations reported last month that there is no room left for funding cuts in post-secondary education if present standards are to be maintained. But various government sources have said cuts will be between \$1.4 billion and \$2 billion a year.

Nova Scotia and New Brunswick are big losers

Nova Scotia and New Brunswick have perhaps the most to lose from cutbacks, because of their small tax bases, and high percentages (about 25 per cent each) of out-of-province students.

Bruce Tate of the National Union of Students (NUS) said cutbacks of federal funding for Nova Scotia universities and colleges will range between about \$5.7 million and \$31.5 million. These estimates are based on cabinet documents, he said.

"The government will likely choose towards the worst," he says.

The former Secretary of State, Francis Fox, testified before the Parliamentary Task Force on Federal-Provincial Relations that priority may be given in future to "training people in skills in demand in the economy", "mission-oriented research", and "applied research".

There are several interpretations on this aspect of the task force report, entitled "Fiscal Federalism in Canada".

Bob Patrie, of the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC), cites the federal government Dodge report on labour markets.

"We think the federal government tends to look at universities as a training ground," he said.

Gerry Regan is still being briefed

Brad Mann, Secretary of State Gerald Regan's parliamentary researcher, denied that the priorities cited by Mr. Fox constitute an attempt to usurp provincial powers in education. Mr. Regan, Halifax Citadel Member of Parliament, is still being briefed on the issue, he said, and can, within limits, change the government position on education priorities. He emphasized

that the two levels of government must come to an agreement over funding.

Mann said no schedule for negotiations has been drawn up.

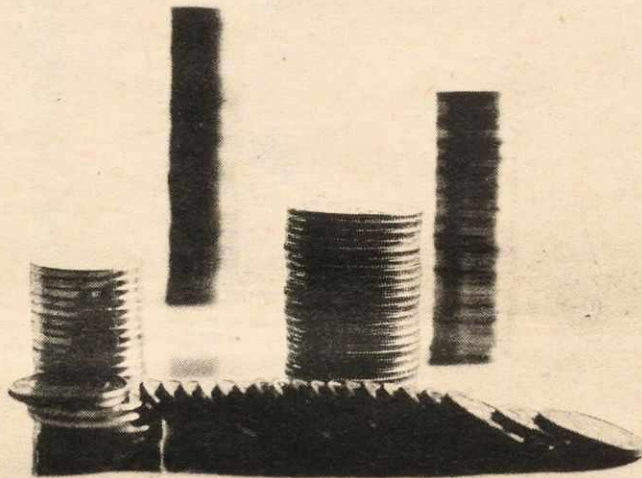
He said Cabinet has not decided how much funding will be cut, and that the public will have to wait until the new federal budget is brought down to find out. (The latest budget rumour is for Oct. 19.)

The Tories are in basic agreement with the Breaux task force report that post-secondary education should not be cut without detailed negotiations with the provinces and the academic community about future roles and priorities. Michael Hatfield, Conservative Party researcher, thinks such negotiations should have begun months ago.

Hatfield fears the feds will announce the cutbacks as a fait accompli. The EPF package for 1982-87 will have to pass through Parliament, and Hat

field said "there will be a hell of a fight". This echoed Tory house leader Walter Baker's promises of a filibuster on the bill.

Editor's note: The following is an article contributed by a student at Carleton University, Ottawa. Thomas Vradenburg will be keeping the Gazette up to date on Parliamentary decisions concerning the impending cuts to post secondary education.



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Anti-cutbacks petition campaign from NUS

Winnipeg (CUP) -- Canada's national student organization has organized a nation-wide petition campaign, calling on the federal government to halt the cutbacks it is planning in post-secondary education funding.

The National Union of Students (NUS) petition also requests:
o A federal inquiry into post-secondary education;
o Replacement of the student loan program with a grant program;
o Publicizing of the full final report of the federal-provincial task force on student aid.

The petition will be presented to federal finance minister Allan MacEachen October 19, after the founding conference of the Canadian Federation of Students (CFS). The new federation will combine NUS and the Association of Student Councils (AOSC).

The petition is part of a coordinated drive to convince the federal government not to go ahead with its proposed \$1.5 billion reduction in transfer payments to the provinces for post-secondary education and health care. Government cabinet ministers have said on a number of occasions that post-secondary education would bear most or all of the cutback. Federal payments now fund 76 per cent of the costs of post-secondary education.

The petition was first circulated in September and is now on most Canadian campuses.

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