

## Devine joins literacy bandwagon

WINNIPEG (CUP) — Literacy has become a focus for national interest and the province of Saskatchewan has jumped on the bandwagon with those who want to do something about it.

With one in four people in Saskatchewan considered to be illiterate — a rate well about the national average of one in five the office of the minister of education announced it was setting up a Literacy Council.

"Saskatchewan's track record is not one to be proud of," said Lorne Hepworth, minister of education, adding he hopes public attention will build up to the point where people will support his council.

The council, which is composed of 18 members, includes Saskatchewan premier Grant Devine as chair, representatives of the business sector (both employees and employers), and literacy organizations.

"We're spending a quarter million on media campaigns, tutors, and teaching materials," said Hepworth.

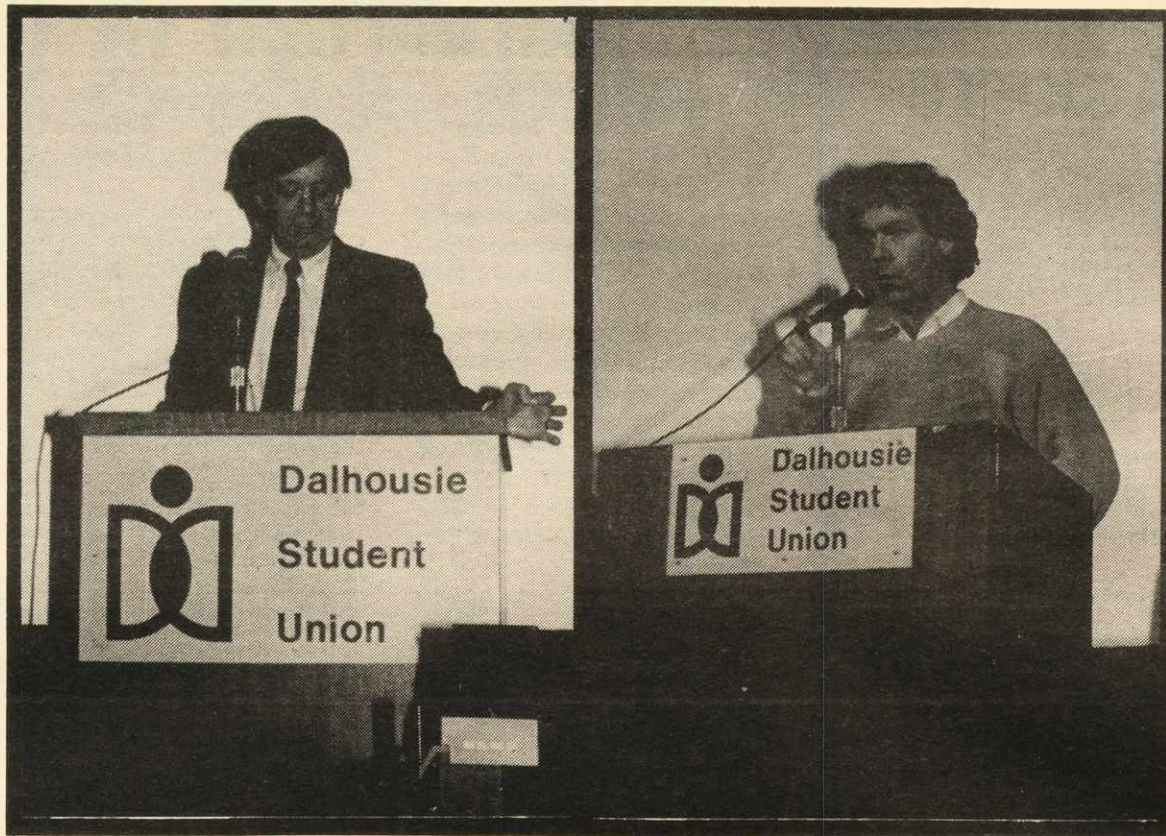
Hepworth likes to think of his council as opening the doors to the world of the future for people who are illiterate, but critics say his office has effectively swept the rug out from under current organizations who deal with illiteracy.

"At the same time they established the council, they cut the many services in the library system and the technical colleges which were a key to literacy," said Peter Prebble, the New Democratic Party's education critic.

The Saskatoon and Regina provincial libraries were forced to take a 30 per cent budget cut, and provincial libraries went down by ten per cent.

"In real dollar terms, this means that after inflation, the provincial libraries have a 15 per cent budget cut," said Prebble, who also criticized the government for cutting out literacy and life skills instructors at various community colleges in the province.

Prebble agreed with Hepworth that it is time to look at literacy, but his overall criticism is "that



The free trade debate held this past Friday in the McInnes Room of the Dalhousie SUB was an exciting match between the pro and con sides. Debators talked according to set rules, each side having five to ten minutes to speak.

these cuts being made are larger than they initiative taken with illiterate, as well as one in five high school graduates.

"We're going to have to decide what 'illiterate' is," he said. "There are people who are denied job positions because they can't read about job opportunities in the papers, and mothers who

can't read the instructions on a bottle of cough medicine."

"I would also say a weakness of the council is that it does not have representatives from the native organizations or from people who have backgrounds in special education," he said. "A lot of people with problems are learning disabled."

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