

Mitchell deserts student meeting

by Susan Johnson

After spending an hour discussing student aid policies with student leaders on Feb. 26, provincial education minister George Mitchell ducked out of a discussion of financing of post-secondary education claiming that he had to attend part of the provincial liberal convention elsewhere in Halifax.

Mitchell had promised the students, members of the Atlantic Federation of Students and local student unions, a two hour meeting. Then, on the morning of the 26th he declared that they could meet for as long as it would take to get the answers to their questions. Mitchell did warn the students that he would have to attend part of the liberal convention but said that he would only be half an hour.

The students were left with Deputy Minister Carmen Moir while Mitchell went off to join the Liberals. Moir refused to answer any questions from the students in the absence of the minister, and advised the students to wait for Mitchell's return to resume discussion.

The students waited for two hours until Moir announced that the meeting was adjourned and left the building, leaving the students with the janitor. As Moir left the room,

AFS secretary-co-ordinator Don Soucy asked for another meeting with Mitchell to finish the discussion. Moir refused the request, telling the students to submit their questions in writing for consideration.

Reaction on the part of the students was unanimous anger. Soucy explained that "while some student leaders had thought meeting with the government was the proper way to try an effect change in government policies that affect students, we all came out of this latest meeting feeling that it had been a complete waste of our time."

Later that same day the students found the student aid information they had gleaned from a reluctant Mitchell had been released to the press the day before and was available in the Halifax morning paper, "The Chronicle Herald". This confirmed the student's belief that government meetings are little more than political charades, said Soucy.

At an AFS executive meeting that followed the meeting with Mitchell the students decided to stop expending energy setting up meetings with government representatives and to, instead, focus their attention on getting information to students.



AFS wins referendum at Memorial University

Students at Memorial University decided on February 23 and 24 by a vote of 506 to 343 to continue their membership in the Atlantic Federation of Students (AFS).

Explaining opposition to the membership question, referenda organizer Patrick Murphy said, "Those that come out against AFS were confusing the organization with their own Council of Student Union and the CSU is not very popular right now because of its demonstrated financial irresponsibility over the past few years."

The referenda at Memorial brought more students out to vote than did the student council election last fall but still it managed to attract less than twenty percent of the students to the polls. It was the first referenda carried out in the region that was not part of annual student union elections.

The federation has been running membership referenda across the Atlantic this spring asking students to pledge one dollar to the organization so that it can work on their behalf with the regional educational groups and governments. To date the organization has run nine referenda and won eight, the loss being at the University of New Brunswick.

The Memorial decision confirms AFS as a regional organization with membership in three of the Atlantic provinces.

Three more join AFS

CHARLOTTETOWN (CUP) -- Membership in the Atlantic Federation of Students (AFS) is rising rapidly as three more post-secondary institutions voted to join the lobby group.

Students at the University of Prince Edward Island voted 439 to 91 Feb. 23 to pay one dollar each to the federation, while the referendum carried 1097 to 300 at Acadia University and 237 to 60 at the Nova Scotia Agricultural College.

Agricultural College students also voted 163-135 to join the National Union of Students.

At UPEI, 31 people wrote "postpone" on their ballots as part of the AFS committee attempt to postpone the referendum for five weeks in order to increase awareness of the organization among students.

Bursaries become scholarships: few other changes in student aid

Text of government press release

February 25, 1977

Hon. George Mitchell, Minister of Education, announced today the student aid program that will be offered for the 1977-78 academic year.

"For the 1977-78 year we will continue for the most part with the 1976-1977 program and criteria with the addition of certain academic requirements that will enable students to qualify for Nova Scotia Government bursaries," he said.

In future, to qualify for a Nova Scotia Government bursary a post-secondary undergraduate student must have been granted by the institution in which he is registered at least:

- four full course credits of five full course credits taken, or
- three full course credits of three or four full courses taken, in the 12 months prior to Aug. 31 in any succeeding year following the first year of enrolment.

This requirement is to be effective September 1, 1977, an extension, to the original date of January 1, 1977, and there will be provision on the bursary application for certification by the university Registrar.

Generally with this one addition, student aid will be made available in 1977-78 on the same basis as for that which has become understood in this year, 1976-77.

Following is the basis for student aid availability:

- The awarding formula remains; the first \$1,400 of a student's need will be advanced in the form of a Canada Student Loan, the next \$1,000 as a bursary from the Government of Nova Scotia, and the next \$400 as an additional loan from the Federal Government. This makes available a maximum of \$2,800 to students who qualify.
- The parental contribution table, the maintenance allowances, the miscellaneous allowance, the transportation allowances, the allowances towards the cost of books, field trips, practice teaching, thesis preparation and so on, will all remain the same.
- The student's contribution from summer employment will still be either: (a) the amount from the Student Contribution Table, or (b) 40 per cent of the gross summer income, whichever is greater, and the verification procedures will remain unchanged.
- As always, any increases in academic fees charged by the universities will automatically be reflected in assessing the needs of individual students.
- Although applications will have to be in a month earlier, the review and appeals procedure will remain virtually unaltered and the Student Aid Office and counsellors will always be available for consultation, help and advice.

"For the 1976-77 summer savings assessments, I have already extended the deadline for appeals," Mr. Mitchell said. "Any student whose summer savings are under review and who has

not received a decision on his or her assessment by February 15 is entitled to appeal the decision up to and including March 15."

"My primary concern", Mr. Mitchell said, "is over the apparent confusion on the part of both students and administrators as to where exactly we stand in terms of student aid."

"While the program for the coming year is not dramatically altered, there are one or two additions that must be clearly understood. I also feel that everyone involved should be informed about the intended direction of student aid and its relative composition in the future."

Mr. Mitchell added that the Canada-Nova Scotia Student Aid Program has long had two basic principles:

"First, the responsibility for the costs of post-secondary education to the individual student remains primarily with the student and his parents."

"Second, both the Federal and Provincial Governments Student Aid Programs are designed to supplement, where needed, the financial resources of the student and his family to ensure as far as possible that qualified students have the opportunity to reach their educational potential."

"A new factor has recently been added," he said. "It appears desirable to develop a regional approach to student aid. Therefore, each province in the Atlantic region has now undertaken to take all reasonable steps and move toward a common program."

Mr. Mitchell noted that there are ingredients of the programs in other provinces which Nova Scotia is prepared to consider.

"A loan remission scheme in New Brunswick is one, and we will be taking a very close look at it to assess the cost in the long run to see if it is something the taxpayers of this province can reasonably be asked to bear," he said.

"There are also parts of the Nova Scotia Student Loan Program which differ from the others but which we feel are sound and reasonable elements," Mr. Mitchell said. "Some of these were included in our program as a result of recommendations by our students and universities, and we do not want to make changes to these at this particular point in time."

"The Department of Education expects, and will continue to appreciate, the help, co-operation and advice of the universities and their students to ensure that we have the best program of student aid commensurate with what we can reasonably afford."

"I frankly believe that we have developed an equitable and sophisticated appeal system with competent administration. This will continue, and if it can be improved it certainly will be."

Mr. Mitchell also noted that "in the move toward a common program for the region, the Maritime Provinces will be closer to uniformity in 1978-79, and perhaps by the following years be in a position to finalize a uniform program."