

Cutbacks at Dalhousie

They do it all for you

"Shocked!" "Disgusted!" "It reflects a lack of recognition of the true value of higher education to the province." "The quality of education and the academic reputation at Dalhousie will be on the decline. Morale will decrease".

All of the above reflect the general reaction to a 5.5% increase in operating grants for next year. All reflect what is in store for Dalhousie. All reflect the problems the departments will be facing next year.

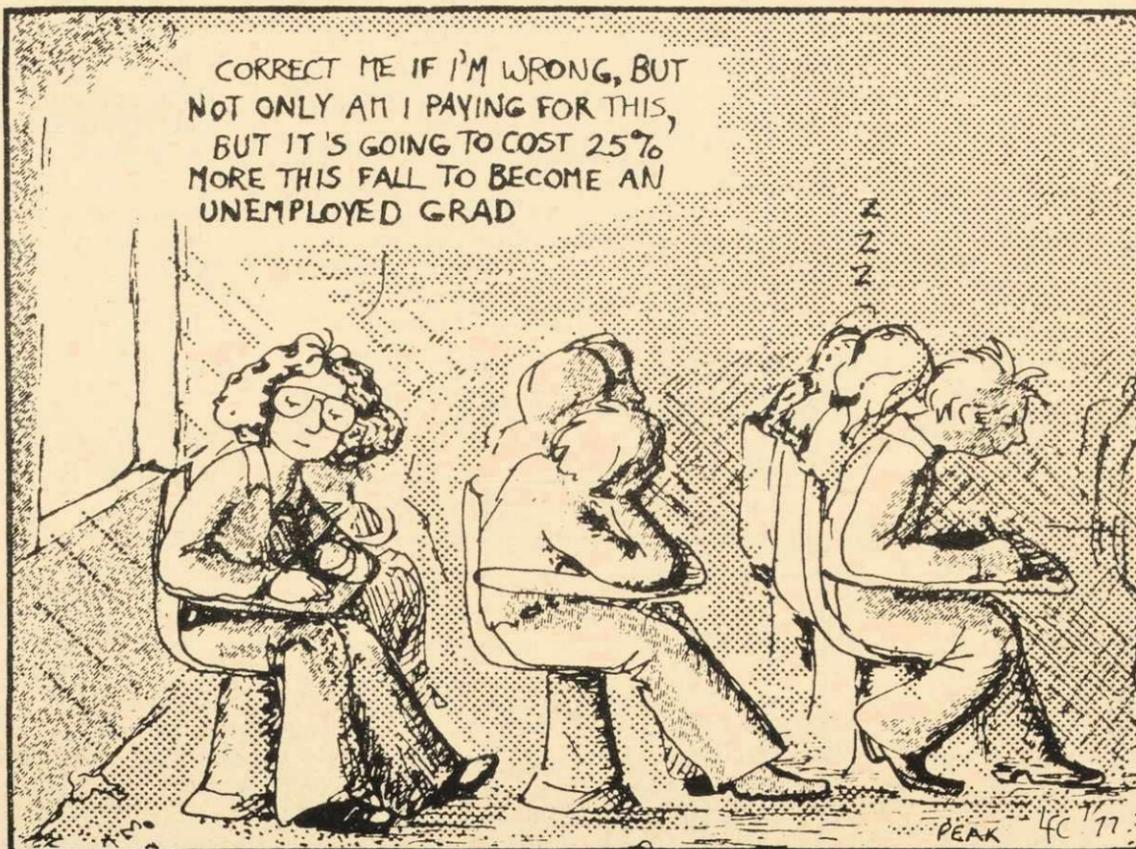
English department

"We are very seriously affected by budgetary restrictions", said Dr. Roland Smith, chairperson of the English Department. "We tighten our belt more and more each year and survive but the possibilities for development diminish".

By receiving a minimal increase, if any, (the budgets for Arts and Science have been frozen for 2 years now) many problems will occur. "Staff, student ratios are already too high and we have always been understaffed". The English Department needs two replacements for next year. Having already gone through an elaborate selection process, a very serious situation will arise if they can't be hired, Smith said. Professors will have to teach outside their main interest, and specialization is necessary to maintain a high quality graduate program.

In addition, travel grants, "the fringe benefits that make our appalling salaries barely tolerable", may be cut. Travel grants allocated by the deans enable professors to do research and lecture elsewhere.

In conclusion, "We can go on but not with any kind of flair, our cutting edge will be



blunted; we will become less and less competitive and incapable of attracting graduates. We now have a very high profile but that will suffer", Smith said.

Philosophy department

Dr. R.M. Martin, Chairperson of the Philosophy Department, sees "A continual deterioration of services" for Dalhousie in the next few years. "Now we have to charge students for xerox copies. There is a stinginess all round", added Martin. He thinks that professors at Dalhousie, faced with the lowest salaries in Canada, will leave, "leaving no doubt at all about the quality of education going down in all kinds of ways". Martin placed part of

the blame on the university administration who "has badly mismanaged the money" here, he said.

Theatre and Music departments

Both the Music and Theatre Departments will be hit hard by the cutback in operating grants. Theatre professor Alan Andrews foresees "a reduction in the production program," an essential part of the department's program. "We recently introduced admission charges, which some of us feel uncomfortable about. It seems inappropriate that in an educational institution we have to charge." Andrews also explained that his department is still waiting for a replacement of a faculty member who left in 1977. "The quality of the work of the faculty and staff is bound to be affected if more demands are made of them. People will leave."

Music Department head Dr. Walter Kemp agrees with Andrews about the loss of performing capabilities for his students. "What worries me is they have taken no account of the programmes that already have existed that incur expenses above normal academic expenses." Music students must perform for the general public as part of their programme. "The knife cuts two ways, one for student expenses and the other for the community's loss". Kemp expressed concern over the imposition of differential fees saying, "The growing international reputation of Dalhousie is in serious jeopardy, especially when we are receiving more enquiries from Europe and the United States". He explained that students "tend not to bother about country", but differential fees is "rather unfortunate" for foreign students.

History department

History Department head Michael Cross said "we are all in for a rough ride" next year. "We have already been operating under the worse kind of constraints for over two years" added Cross. He thinks the decision "makes political sense because universities are not great vote gatherers". He described the government's decision as "shortsighted", resulting in disastrous effects of the economy of Halifax. "It means an increase in unemployment, welfare and people going down the road" added Cross.

Science department

Science related departments will be adversely effected by the government decision. Biology head Dr. Brian Hull personally wrote Premier Buchanan pointing out that "The biology department alone brought in \$760,000 in research grants and \$60,000 in fellowship money for graduate students from outside. We face the loss of top professors, and the loss of necessary equipment leading to a lower quality of biological science at Dalhousie." Hull said, while enrollment increases and monies decrease, a situation will emerge where the quality of biological education will diminish.

Chemistry department

Dr. William E. Jones, chemistry department head, says his department will suffer dramatically because of minimal increase plus the devalued dollar. "The cost of chemicals and supplies had risen by 15-20% every year, this year they are going up by 50%. We import many chemicals from the United States resulting in not only inflation

to fight* with but the 20% reduction in the dollar".

Math department

Math department head, Dr. Patrick Stewart, sees faculty problems arising because of the present situation. "The obvious danger with poor funding will be in offering professors a decent wage". The most qualified professors will depart, leaving the least qualified to replace them. Thus a general decline in the quality of the faculty will occur."

Computer Centre

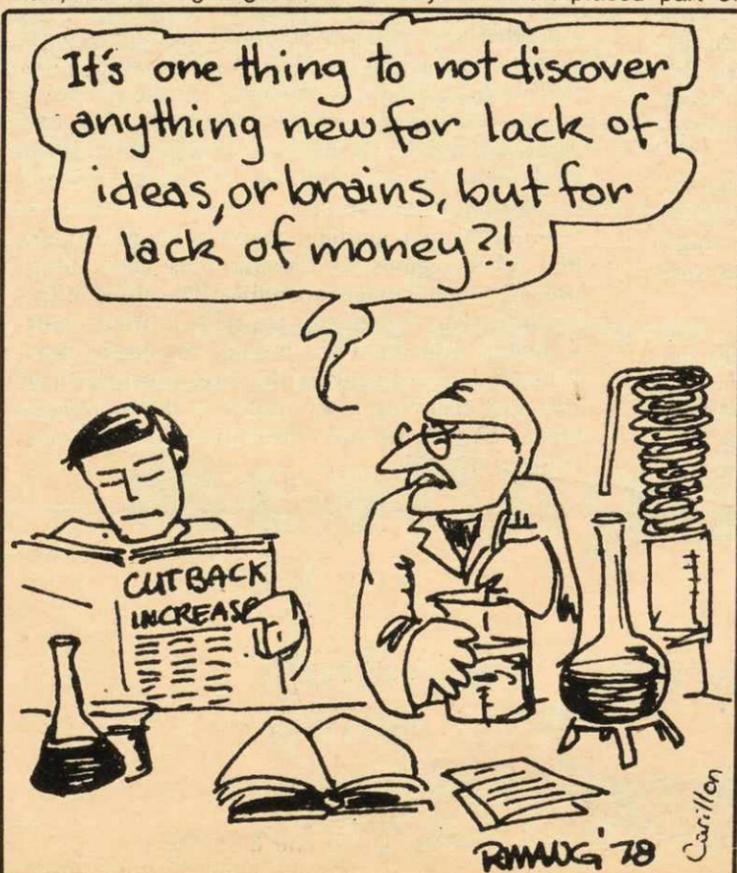
Computer Centre head, Intub Ali, thinks the educational level of the centre decreasing as funding decreases. "I can see us becoming worse off", said Ali explaining that as demand for more terminals increases the funds won't be there. Because of this students will have to use after midnight hours. "I'll be able to maintain staffing but not services", said Ali.

Language departments

Hardest hit will be departments like German, Russian and Spanish who import most of their texts from foreign sources. Dr. Friedrich Gaede of the German Department says, "The new budget will mean that the German Department will have less money for books". Two factors affect these departments, (1) high prices for the texts overseas and (2) the currency situation. Dr. Gaede exemplified this by saying "the Canadian dollar has lost value in relation to the deutschmark, so that the German Department now is able to buy only 50% of the books it could five years ago".

Library

Hardest hit by the cutback and most important to students will be the library. According to University Librarian, Mrs. Dorothy Cooke, the cutback will "effect the ability to provide good service" to the students. She explained that the library has been working on a zero growth budget for periodicals which means that if a department requires a new subscription, "a periodical of a lesser priority will have to be dropped". The danger that emerges from this is a loss in continuity from year to year. Also the book budget may be adversely affected for next year. "The announcement could mean no increase in the book budget which means less books for next year." Also when and if funds become available, the library will have to purchase the books on the out of print market which could easily mean double the price. Cooke sees a further cutback to students in perhaps a reduction of staff could lead to "possibly a cut down in hours".



The MPHEC's identity crisis

by Ron Stang

What happens when the credibility of a body set up to represent a certain group's interests begins to be doubted by the people it represents?

In this case the body is the Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission (MPHEC) and the people it represents are the 17 universities and colleges in the Maritime region.

For the past three years the MPHEC has presented to the Maritime governments proposed operating budgets for post-secondary institutions and each time these proposals have been turned down.

This has led to public speculation about the effectiveness of the commission.

For the budget year 1977-78, the commission asked for 11.5%, the Council of Maritime Premiers, (CMP) granted 7%; in 78-79, it recommended 14%, approval was given for 6.7% plus regional adjustment; and, at a recent press conference, the CMP announced that for the 1979-80 budget year, it would allocate only 5.5%. The MPHEC had asked for 9.5%.

The proposed increases submitted by the MPHEC have been more than reasonable taking into account that governments are practicing spending restraints. As the commission's proposal for 1979-80 makes clear, the sum applied for is "intended to allow institutions to provide existing levels of service without further resource deterioration although it is considerably below the level of assistance requested by institutions after including an allowance for inflation."

Nevertheless, its proposals have been consecutively under cut by the provinces. The reason given—"spending restraints."

•••

the MPHEC was established in 1971 to function as a planning and advisory group for the Maritime governments.

A creature of the Council of Maritime Premiers (CMP), a political body set up by Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island to coordinate certain policy areas the three have in common, the commission's role is to act as a liaison between colleges and universities and the governments. The commission submits proposals to government covering all facts of university operations, from requests for new academic programs to applications for financial assistance. (Governments pay all additional operating expenses over revenue derived from tuition fees and private grants).

As the MPHEC defines itself, its purpose is "to assist the province and the institutions in attaining a more efficient and effective utilization and allocation of resources in the field of higher education in the region."

The commission's role is one of intermediate status between the institutions and governments, taking on both a lobbying role on behalf of the former and the dispenser of policy for the latter.

FINANCIAL PLANNING

The most important function of the MPHEC is financial planning for the Maritimes' 17 colleges and universities. Every autumn each of these educational institutions submits two budget proposals. One is immediate, pertaining to the institution's next budget year. The other is more long-term, outlining the institution's projected costs over the next three years.

The commission reaches an across-the-board

figure which is passed on to the provincial treasury boards. The boards are the final arbiters in deciding whether to accept or reject the commission's budget request.

The colleges and universities also submit their three year cost projections statements. In making their decisions on how much money to allocate for the next budget year, the treasuries take into consideration the institutions' long-term spending figures.

When the CMP decide to allocate less money than recommended by the MPHEC, the difference must be made up by the individual institutions. This is done either through increasing tuition fees, cutting back proposed or existing academic programs, or cutbacks in staff and capital projects such as new buildings and research equipment.

TREADING THE FINE LINE

Over the past few years student federations and students councils in the Maritimes have time and

need to survive.

The MPHEC must walk a tight rope between its role as representative of the interests of the post-secondary institutions and its role as government agent distributing policy guidelines and funding. It is this ambivalent position which has led to questions about its credibility.

During the past few years, various university administrators and student groups have speculated publicly that the MPHEC was not an effective lobbying group simply because it was an agent of the government. The commission was no longer regarded as an objective, impartial group. The commission came in for criticism when the government allocated less than the amount the MPHEC had requested.

Not the least of these sentiments was expressed by Dalhousie vice-president Guy MacLean recently in announcing his resignation from the commission. Said MacLean, "it makes me doubtful as to the use of the MPHEC if the government just goes ahead and applies to universities the guidelines of every other department."

Like previous reports of the Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission (MPHEC) this year's application for financial support to the Council of Maritime Premiers (CMP) speaks directly to the negative effects government restraint programs have had on the quality of education in the region's post-secondary educational institutions. Among the points it makes are these:

• "Faculty salary levels at Maritime institutions are the lowest in Canada and in the past year they have had a further decline proportionally to the Canadian average. The continuing deterioration of faculty levels is having a negative effect upon this mobile resource as it appears to be contributing to the outflow of qualified faculty from the region."

• "As a result of the fiscal restraint environment, institutions have been undertaking only minimum equipment replacement and building repairs and maintenance. If this practice continues, not only will educational quality suffer but there will also be a depletion of the institutions' capital resources, all of which will be required in the future given present enrollment projection."

• "Research capabilities are directly related to the capability of faculty members and the relative decline in Maritime salary levels will result in a diminution of the quality of this resource at a time when it should be developing."

• "... the situation has reached the point where institutions face decisions of whether to take action that will result in further quality deterioration or to reduce program offerings. This places institutions in a dilemma since steps in either direction could result in students deciding to leave the region for post-secondary training."

again railed against the provinces cutbacks in education spending. These groups have argued that cutbacks can only lead to a decline in the "quality of education".

Although if they have perhaps been most outspoken, it hasn't only been student organizations upset and worried about such cutbacks. Also concerned have been the university administrators and last, but certainly not least, the MPHEC itself.

In fact, a survey of the commission's reports over the past few years reads like annual barometers indicating the increasingly desperate role the region's colleges and universities find themselves in. It's all there in black print. The reports state that with the highest costs and the lowest grant revenue in the country, the service provided by Maritime post-secondary educational institutions is deteriorating rapidly.

At the outset of the commission's latest report it says that government funding has reached such a low level it now is even less than the average restraint levels for other government services and departments.

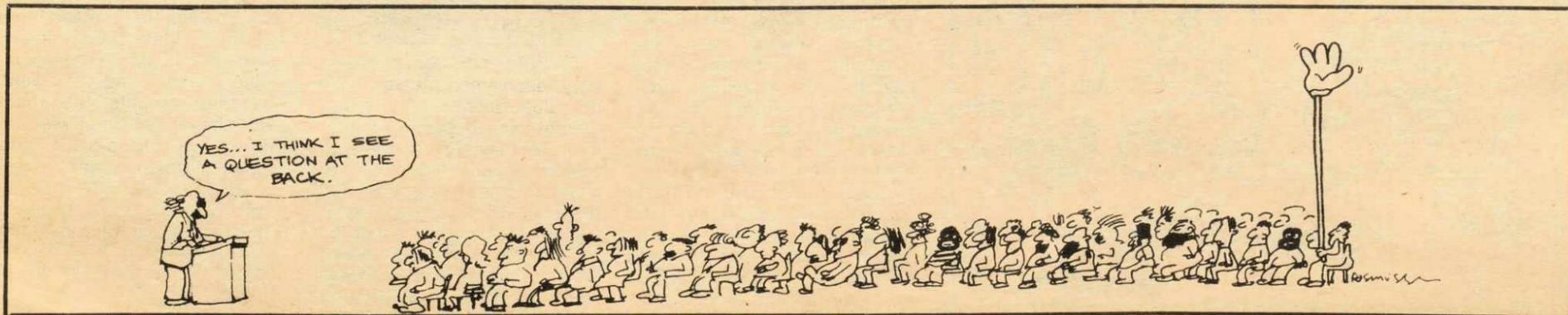
Every year the commission has documented the ongoing plight of the regions post-secondary institution system, like indicating the last rise in the water level around a sinking ship. Yet each year the provinces apparently ignore the warnings and continue to allocate far less than what the institutions

POLITICAL ROLE

It's important to note that the CMP's dealings with the region's post-secondary institutions through the MPHEC is not governed strictly by bureaucratic procedures. The premiers won't approve or disapprove budget requests based solely on whether a program is effective or not. What comes into play in this whole process of application and review is perhaps one overriding consideration—politics.

Because of its highly political nature, the CMP enacts policies—whether they be in education or in any other area of its jurisdiction—in a manner extremely sensitive to how they'll still be received by the public. Always in the back of the premiers' minds is their own personal vulnerability as elected leaders. If a policy is popular, it's a good bet it will be promoted by the politicians. If it isn't, to them it can be anathema.

In recent years public opinion in the Maritimes, like other regions in Canada, has been disapproving of government spending. The effect of this sentiment on government policy as it affects post-secondary education has become extremely clear. While the governments in the three provinces have curtailed spending in a number of administrative areas, the colleges and universities have been particularly hard hit.



Provincial

Government policy - regional disparity

The underfunding of universities and colleges in Nova Scotia is not a new phenomenon nor is it restricted to this province. Post-secondary education throughout the country is coming under a protracted assault, but as with most features in the nature of the Canadian economic system, regional disparity adds an element that presents the problem is an especially acute and pressing light.

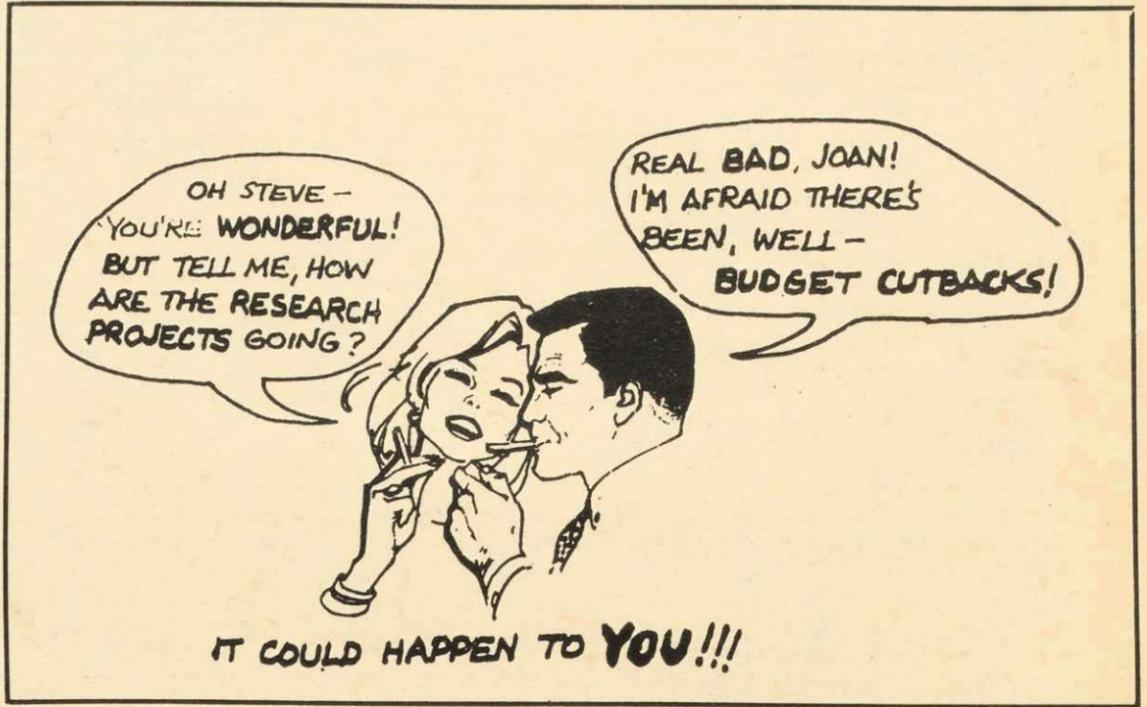
In the midst of the highest tuition in the country, the lowest faculty salaries and particularly low levels of funding, the role that is played by the federal government in determining the direction of higher education becomes a crucial question. Given the provincial government's recent announcement that post-secondary funding will increase by only 5.5% next year, it is necessary to examine the financing in terms of where the money actually comes from to get a clear picture of the situation.

The provincial government does not pay for the costs of operating universities and colleges by itself. Under a financing agreement with the federal government negotiated in 1967, the province receives massive amounts of

these "established" programmes in one package with specific amounts of money targeted for each programme. The EPF replaced a cost-sharing arrangement for post-secondary education (the Fiscal Arrangements Act) that saw the federal government match dollar for dollar the amount spent by the provinces. The EPF is different in that the transfer of federal funds is no longer conditional on provincial expenditures, but is tied to the rate of growth in the Gross National Product. Consequently, the provincial government is able to reduce its own expenditure from year to year without affecting the transfers from Ottawa.

If we look at post-secondary spending over a recent two-year period (see chart), the first years the EPF took effect, we can identify both a diversion of the federal funds and a reduction in the provincial contribution from the first year to the next. The amount of federal money increased by nearly 15 million dollars while the increase in the total expenditure was less than 10 million.

Though exact figures are not available for this past year, the federal Department



capital projects, student aid, teachers and nursing schools, but its actual expenditure on operating grants is minimal and decreasing. It is the money from the EPF that will be paying for the five million dollar increase and there will no doubt be lots of the federal money left over that will not find its way into education.

The federal government has historically acted as a primary resource for funding of post-secondary education. Though it is restricted from determining education policy because of the BNA Act, it has indirectly shaped the development of the post-secondary system by way of its financial contributions. The provinces have never had the necessary resources to provide a quality education system, particularly with the widespread expansion in the sixties. As a result, Ottawa consistently has had to assume a prominent financing role, evidently based on the premise that education represents a national interest.

It is this common recognition of the need for a federal presence by both levels of government that led to a built-in accommodation for regional disparity within the EPF itself. The Atlantic provinces are receiving "catch-up" allowances through the cash grants each year to help

bring standards in the region on a level with those in the rest of the country; Thus, the large increases each year to Nova Scotia, regardless of the growth rate in the G.N.P.

In its recommendations for 78-79, the Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission called on the Maritime Premiers to recognize these special payments from the federal government to offset regional disparity. The Commission suggested an equalization funding component in light of its expressed concern over high tuition, low faculty salaries and the relative position in general of the Maritime institutions. The Premiers rejected the recommendation and in this year's report, the MPHEC dropped any reference to the EPF or regional disparity, along with reducing its funding recommendation from 14% to 9.5%.

Following Prime Minister Trudeau's announcement last August of a restraint programme to cut spending by 2 billion dollars, Jean Chretien, his Finance Minister, announced in September a plan to cut back a number of transfer payments to the provinces, including the EPF. But in a federal-provincial negotiating session, Chretien met with a hard line from the provinces and had to back

down on the proposal to cut a key social services arrangement.

Newly elected Nova Scotia Premier John Buchanan was on the radio within days proclaiming a victory for the provinces and announcing that his government would now not have to make any cutbacks to social services and education. Since then, the provincial government has embarked on its own restraint programme and not surprisingly, social services and education are the first to "tighten up".

The overwhelming presence of the federal government in post-secondary financing begs the question of who is to assume responsibility for the state of chaos the system is presently in throughout the country. If education is seen as a national interest, then it makes little sense to facilitate the undermining of the entire system through a funding mechanism that encourages restraint and deterioration.

But more importantly for the present, there is the position of the Nova Scotia government. It is difficult to appreciate the justification for continued underfunding with the catch-all, "the money just isn't there." There is more than enough money. It is a matter of commitment.

Post-secondary spending (Millions)

	76-77	77-78
Federal contribution (EPF)	57.5	72.4
Total amount spent	76.4	85.7
Net Difference (Nova Scotia cont.)	18.9	13.3

Source: Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission, Financial Plan 1978-79

federal money each year for the funding of post-secondary education. But there is no stipulation that the federal funds actually be spent on education so the province is given the "flexibility" to divert the money into other areas.

The funding arrangement is called Established Programmes Financing (EPF) and covers three areas: hospital insurance, medicare and post-secondary education. The federal government transfers tax points and cash grants for

of Finance estimated the EPF transfers for post-secondary education to Nova Scotia would increase by 13 million dollars. And it is probably safe to say that for 79-80 the federal contribution will continue to increase at a substantial rate. Yet the provincial government has promised that total spending will increase by only 5 million dollars. It becomes clear that the provincial government is left with very little of the "burden" of financing operating assistance levels. It spends money on

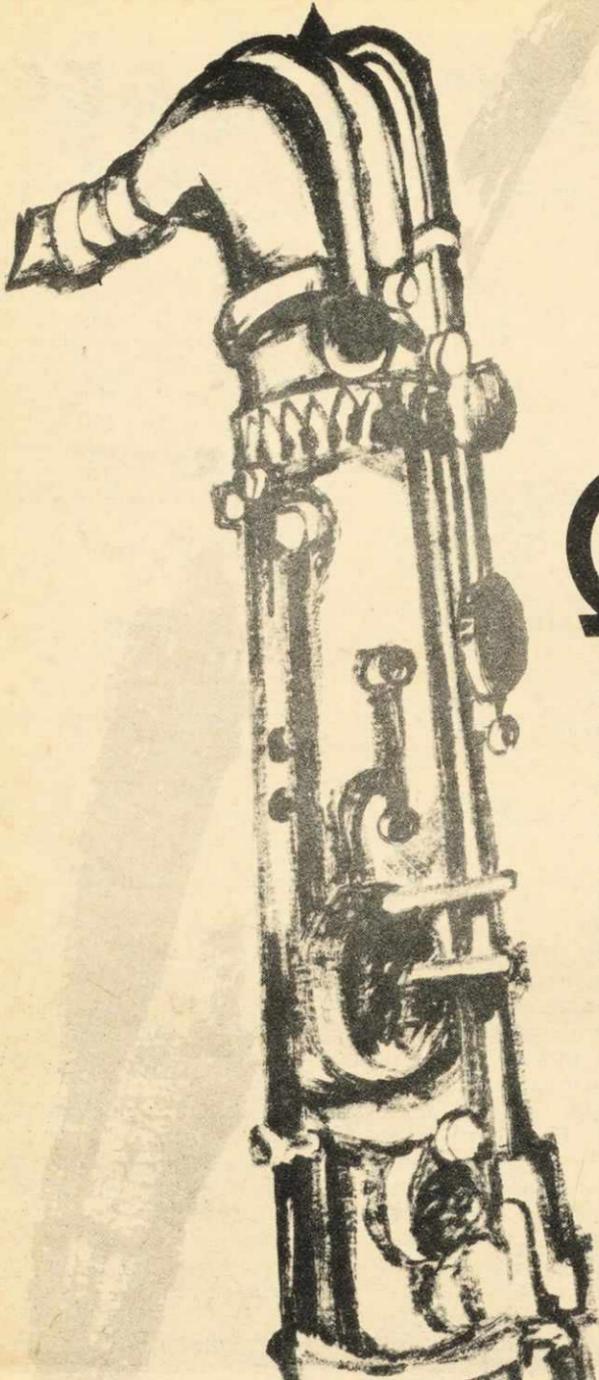
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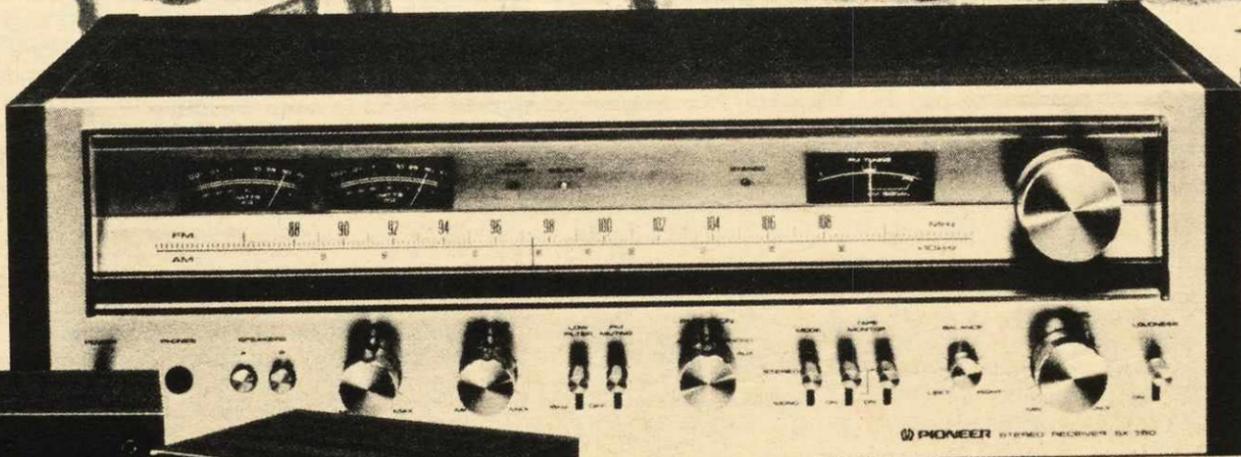
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