

Action against bad professors

MONTREAL (CUP) — Whether they're boring, uninspired or incoherent, every student has bad professors who don't teach well. Quebec's two largest student groups agree there's a problem, but not what to do about it.

One group wants to get rid of life-tenure altogether because they say it takes away incentive and makes professors lazy.

The other group thinks bad working conditions are forcing professors to carry too heavy a load. Professors have to balance research and fulfilling quotas of published articles with an impossible teacher-student ratio.

Quality of education is a problem but its roots is in university and CEGEP underfunding, not poor teaching ability, they say.

In a recent press release, the Regroupement des Associations Etudiantes Universitaires (RAEU) said life-tenure for professors should be abolished and five year contracts, renewed on the basis of student evaluations, should be set up in its place.

"The inexistence of measures to control the quality of teaching and

research has left Quebec universities in a crisis of legitimacy," said Charles Gallant, internal secretary of RAEU. "This cannot be solved by throwing more money at them."

"You don't have to be in university for very long to see that many professors have no idea how to teach," said Michel LeComte of RAEU.

The five year contract system is also a money-saving scheme and a way to solve university underfunding.

According to McGill Students' Society Vice President (External) Luc Joli-Coeur, hiring younger teachers to replace those who were "no good" could save an estimated \$100 million.

"Universities should look at the expense side instead of the revenue side (government grants and student fees) to improve funding," he said.

The rival student group, Association National D'Etudiant(e)s du Quebec (ANEQ) said abolishing

ing tenure is a simplistic and irresponsible answer to the problem of quality of post-secondary education.

"It's not going to solve anything to kick the few incompetent professors out the door," said Jean-Pierre Paquet of ANEQ's central council.

"They (RAEU) are blaming professors for an erosion of the entire university system.

"How many incompetent professors are there anyway? Maybe 2-3 per cent."

Last year, students at the University of Montreal in a survey considered 8 per cent of their professors as terrible, 10 per cent as excellent and the rest average or good.

When several McGill's economics professors eating lunch together were interviewed about RAEU's suggestion to have re-hiring dependent on student evaluations, they could not believe anyone would take such a suggestion seriously.

"This would lead to a popularity vote," one said.

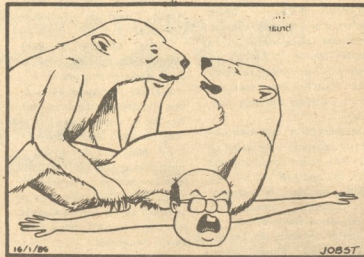
"It would result in professors courting students to get their vote even if they were catching them under nonsense," another said.

All agreed that it would stifle independent research and thinking.

President of the Dawson teachers union at Dawson CEGEP in Westmount, Que. Patrick Powers said there is no way the

union would accept re-hiring if the administration controlled the review of student evaluations.

"Administrations could use the evaluations to get rid of teachers for political reasons," he said. "The best form of evaluation would be if teachers could do it themselves in co-operation with the students."



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