

Some students support Axworthy proposals

By Lori Coolican (CUP)

RARE THOUGH THEY MAY BE, SOME STUDENTS actually support Human Resources Minister Lloyd Axworthy's plan to cut transfer payments to post-secondary education and introduce a new system of income-contingent student loans.

In a week when university students across the country protested over the proposals, some such people were reluctant to talk.

One student at the University of Regina spoke on the condition that he remain anonymous. "Someone always gets hurt when you make cuts," he said, adding that predictions of tuition rates quadrupling are pure speculation. Other students support Axworthy's plan out of concern for what they think is the greater good of society."

Changes to how post-secondary education is funded would increase the accessibility of universities to people who are not members of the upper and middle classes," said Chris Myrick, a graduate of political science from Memorial University.

Myrick's opinion is contrary to that of many student protesters, who believe that a hike in tuition would make

education even more elitist. Myrick points to research that suggests unfairness in the current system, allowing universities to be dominated by upper and middle class students. "While students have a right to strike and protest, they do it out of self-interest, not concern for society as a whole," Myrick said.

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Bryan Larson, an education major at U of R, agrees with Myrick's assessment. His main reason for supporting Axworthy, however, is linked to the national debt. According to Larson, Canada's financial crisis justifies making cuts to education. "It's going to hurt now...but I know it's necessary."

When asked about the prospect of university closures, Larson said, "I would be willing to accept it if this occurred."

In answer to this same question, Myrick replied, "I'm

not sure every university should be open, really."

University of Regina economics professor Michael Rushton points out that increased tuition fees would be the result of provincial decisions, not Axworthy's plan. This is because education falls under provincial jurisdiction according to the constitution.

"It's a complicated issue," he says, and describes the student strike as a "knee-jerk reaction." Rushton speculates that increasing the availability of student loans would benefit the larger, more established universities who are better at attracting students to their campuses.

Other students, while opposed to funding cuts, are strongly in favour of income-contingent loans. Christine Hardacker is one such person. "I'm currently attempting to organize support for Axworthy based on his proposal of income-contingent loans, but not the proposed cuts," said Hardacker, who is having trouble making payments on the loan that allowed her to attend Simon Fraser University.

Of course, critics argue that people who believe government arguments about the inevitability of social program cuts have been hoodwinked by propaganda and are not able to frame Canada's problems differently.

Federal Summer Student Employment Program

Anyone interested in employment within the Federal Government this summer:

There will be an information session regarding the FSSEP application forms.

Who? Tony Dolan
(Public Service Commission)

Theresa Toombs
(Canada Employment Center)

When? Thursday, Feb 2, 1995
3pm to 4pm

Where? Robertson Library 109

Anyone interested or with questions about the application process is encouraged to attend..

UPEI Women's Center
Monday thru Friday
8:30 - 4:30
6 - 10

Upcoming budget bodes ill for status of women council

By Christine Vila (CUP)

CANADA'S NATIONAL WOMEN'S RESEARCH GROUP may be the latest victim of the federal government's upcoming budget.

The Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women (CACSW) has been central in focusing the government's attention on women's issues since its inception in 1973, following the recommendation of a Royal Commission.

It has given a voice to women across the country, produced ground-breaking research and launched important publications on subjects ranging from date rape to employment equity.

However, the CACSW's days seem to be numbered as the budget and inevitable public service cuts loom ahead in February. The council's \$1.2 million dollar budget may well be one of those cuts.

No new members have been appointed to the council's advisory board since the last election. According to CACSW public affairs co-ordinator Ellen Adelberg, council president Dr. Glenda Simmshas had her mandate extended to Oct. 31, 1995, but no new president has been named yet.

In response to the possibility of the council's closure, women across the country have responded with indignation. Letters of support have flooded the council, and underline the importance of a national voice for women.

Greta Hofmann Nemiroff, joint chair of women's studies at the University of Ottawa and Carleton University, explained, "I am struck with how central the council has been in identifying central issues facing women in Canada, researching them, and providing the public with accessible and well documented information."

Phyllis D. Scott, president of the Canadian Federation of University Women, stressed the role of the council on a national level: "The United Nations Human Development Index ranks Canada as number one in the world. It drops to ninth place when women are factored in. This gender gap is one of the largest in the world. The CACSW works to close this gap. They provide

leadership to women, advise government, act as arm's length advisory bodies, conduct excellent research."

Hofmann Nemiroff concurred, "The council has enjoyed particular credibility because of its representative nature and its 'arm's length' relationship with the federal government."

In the past 12 months alone, the CACSW has been invaluable in its work of informing the public on the status of Canadian women.

It has researched the taxation system with regards to child support, and made recommendations to the government as to how to make the system more fair. It brought together more than 250 delegates and observers for a national symposium on women and health. It launched an extensive fact book on work and the family, the first of its kind in Canada. It analyzed women's progress in Canada since 1985 to prepare for the 1995 United Nations World Conference on Women to be held in Beijing. Canada's role and preparedness for the Beijing Conference is questionable without the national voice the council provides. Universities, particularly women's studies programs, use a lot of the material published by the council.

Says Abby Lippman, acting director of the McGill Centre for Research and Teaching on Women, "I, and many others in the academic community, have continually benefitted from these sources and work of the CACSW. Its input into the public discussion of issues critical to women is unique, of great value, and must be maintained."

The council's long-term work projects would have to be scrapped if it was forced to fold. Adelberg said that studies on immigrant women's housing, aboriginal women in urban areas, the economic costs of violence, child care including alternative policy framework and the tax treatment of child support are all in the works.

Though provincial organizations exist, the CACSW acts as a federal watchdog. If abolished, there is nothing to say provinces won't do the same to trim their budgets.