

Debt Load Explosive

VANCOUVER (CUP) — The average debt load for a University of British Columbia student graduating this year has skyrocketed to \$15,000, an increase of \$12,000 since 1984. And students who borrow the maximum loan amount for a four-year program face a debt load of about \$32,000, including interest payments.

Byron Hender, UBC's awards and financial aid officer says the provincial Social Credit government is allowing students to borrow increasing amounts of money, adding to already enormous debt levels.

The Soereds eliminated the grants portion of the provincial student assistance program in 1984, and have made no plans to redress B.C.'s dismal state of student aid since Bill Vander Zalm was swept to power in August.

Provincial funding for student aid has sunk from \$33 million in 1982 to \$12.5 million in 1986. British Columbia is the only province that does not offer non-repayable bursaries as part of its student aid program.

UBC student council president Simon Sashadri called the student aid situation "horrendous."

"The government's idea was to help more people a lower cost when they eliminated the program," said Sashadri. "But are we really helping students by sending them into that much debt?"

But post-secondary education minister Russ Fraser said the provincial government has addressed the state of student aid in B.C., and that is the federal government's loan re-mission scheme that should be improved.

"None of us want students to graduate with high debt loads," said Fraser.

Still student aid critics say rising debt loads may prompt students to default on their loans. New Democrat post-secondary education critic Lorne Nicholson said the rate of defaulting loans is a "time bomb" for the Soereds government.

"Students are going into personal bankruptcy under the current system. It's a major deterrent to people who want an education," said Nicholson. Don Holubitsky, a UBC

student representative to a recent meeting of the Universities Council of B.C., called on the government to use a more fair loan repayment scheme.

"As loans increase the default rate increases, which means an additional cost for government," Holubitsky said adding a fairer system could save the government money.

Editor's Note: The photograph which appeared with Robert Bodrog-Goodland's poem "Shooting Stars" in last week's issue should not have appeared. We are featuring this poem again as it was originally intended by the author. We apologize for any inconvenience this may have caused to the author.

Shooting Stars

For Patricia —
who was there with me

*Clusters of ancient molten matter,
Streaking through darkness in fiery descent,
They fall to earth and finally shatter
The stillness, suddenly and infrequent.
By stealth they dash across the wayward night,
In ominous motion, almost haunting;
And yes, wish we may, and wish we might,
In a frozen instant, futility taunting.
Yet inside ourselves as we play the game
We hold our breath while we make believe,
Hoping it's true, so we pray for and name
Anything the stars in heaven could conceive.*

Robert Bodrog-Goodland

Lost

Lost on Campus near the Visitors Parking Lot a lady's red scarf. Would the finder Please return it to Professor

Rosemarie Bernardenelli, Department of Modern Languages, Main Building. Thank you.
Rosemarie Bernardenelli

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