

Politicians speak out on education

By Peter Gillis

On Wednesday, November 12th, several politicians expressed their views on higher education. They were part of a rally protesting cuts to education sponsored by UPEI's Student Union.

Janice Broderick, President of the UPEI Student Union, was the first to criticize current government policies. "Accessible, affordable, quality education is going by the wayside because our government is concerned about money only -- not the lives of the people they represent."

She detailed how over one million dollars in cuts have crippled the extra-curricular service offered by the university. Due to the cuts, UPEI has given up ownership of its rink, forcing students to pay \$125 for intramural hockey. Also, the library has seen a thirty percent cut in periodicals, severely affecting the availability of up to date research material.

She explained how investment in higher education is an investment in the economy of Prince Edward Island. UPEI is the third largest employer in PEI. The government provides 27 million in funding and sees a return of over \$100 million in taxes and spending.

"Our university gives back to this island, government, and community. However, we are the target of cuts that make it impossible for some young people to even think of attending a higher education institution. Those that do decide to pursue their education are saddled with a debt load that can be as high as \$25,000," said Broderick.

"Summer jobs paying \$5.40/hr do not pay for \$3,150 worth of tuition, not to mention books, groceries, and a roof over our head."

The next speaker, Marion Boyd, also voiced her concern of rising debt. Quoting a re-

cent report by the Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission, she explained that the average student debt load for a four year degree will double by the year 2005. Today, the average amount owed by graduating students is twenty thousand dollars. This is expected to rise to forty thousand within the next five years.

"With a debt like that after university, you have no future. You owe your lives to the banks," Boyd stated. "Education is a public resource like water and health care. It is not a product to be purchased at private cost."

Paul Connolly, Liberal MLA, accused the government of ignoring promises made during the election. During the election, the Conservatives promised stable funding for UPEI if elected. Since assuming power, though, they have since cut two million dollars from their budget.

This attack on a lack of stable funding was continued by Herb Dickieson, the only NDP member of the House. "The Binns government has failed to live up to its responsibilities," he accused. The government may have promised stable funding, but "if it's stable, it's stably low. There is nothing stable about that."

He further questioned the morality of private lending institutions profiting from students' quest for education.

Chester Gillan, Minister of Education, eventually took the stand to defend his government's policies. He agreed that tuition was rising, yet the costs are still met due the desire of students for a higher education. University students, he explained, still make more money than people who lack a university degree. This fact should keep attendance at UPEI high.

In a surprise appearance, Premier Pat Binns was the final speaker of the day. He blamed cuts in transfer pay-

ments from the federal government for rising costs in tuition. The initiation of the COST resulted in a reduction of \$27 million in funds sent to the province. However, he then claimed that the loss in funding was not passed on to UPEI.

"We have not passed those cuts on the University or to students," he said. "We recognize that education and health care are priorities in this province and that's why we have not passed those cuts on."

In light of their current reduction of 6 percent, this comment was not well received by the students in attendance.

Premier Binns most difficult moment came after a question was posed from the crowd. Jason Gaudet, a student at the rally, pointed to the proposed \$500,000 in grants for people who wish to buy computers. He wondered why the government was helping high income earners buy computers when students have other needs.

"We have worked hard to maintain funding for education," Premier Binns responded, "and we believe that [the grant for computers] will help with the education problems of this province."

The speeches ended at 2pm when the MLA's entered the House for the opening of the legislature.

Report Predicts Student Debt Will Double

By Peter Gillis

A report on the effects of rising tuition was released in Halifax on November 12th. The study examined the effects of increasing costs of tuition and the impact that these costs have on who decides to attend university.

According to the Maritime Higher Education Commission, the average student debt load for a four year degree will double by the year 2005 to almost forty thousand dollars. Many students are willing take on such a debt, believing a university degree will help them get a job. However, there is a growing group of young people, mostly from low-income families, who are deciding not to pursue higher education.

The commission asked questions of 19 focus groups with university students from various parts of the Maritimes. They then conducted a survey of 1500 high school students and their parents last June.

FIND ENERGY IN RESERVE If life seems to be getting repetitive, maybe you need to re-energize in the Naval Reserve. You work selected evenings and weekends, learning with hands-on experience, meeting people with similar interests, and earning extra income. Find that hidden energy you have inside, and join the Naval Reserve.

For more information, come and see us or call us at:

HMCS QUEEN CHARLOTTE
10 Water Street Parkway, Charlottetown, PEI
368-0432 / 0447 or 1-800-856-8488

www.dnd.ca

CANADIAN
FORCES

Regular and Reserve



RESERVE



National
Défense nationale

YOUR PRIDE. YOUR FUTURE. YOUR MOVE.