

N.B. Must Get In Step With Same-Sex Relationships.

[Reprinted from the September 28th, 2002 edition of the Telegaph Journal]

In 1969, then-Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau declared that there was no place for the state in the bedrooms of the nation. Nevertheless, more than 30 years later same-sex couples in New Brunswick are still involved in an uphill battle for equality with their heterosexual neighbours, and – lately - even with their counterparts elsewhere in Canada.

Nowhere is this more true than in the area of spousal survivor benefits.

In the New Brunswick Pension Benefits Act, a “spouse” is defined as “either of a man and a woman”.

Same-sex couples in New Brunswick probably find little comfort in the fact that they share this archaic discrimination with their peers in Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland. Nor, we expect, does it bring them much solace to know that pension benefits have been available to the survivors of same-sex relationships in British Columbia and Ontario only since 1999; in Nova Scotia since 2000; in Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta since 2001; and in Quebec, since earlier this year.

Probably the sole reason, in fact, for this sudden surge of enlightenment across most of the rest of Canada is a landmark 1999 decision of the Supreme Court of Canada. Originating in Ontario, *M. v. H.* was a case involving the right, under the Ontario Family Law Act, of a lesbian to a division of property and support payments from her estranged partner, who had been the major breadwinner in a long-term relationship which ultimately had dissolved.

In finding in the claimant’s favour, Canada’s highest court declared that the definition of “spouse” in the Ontario legislation – which was similar to that in New

Brunswick – was discriminatory and in violation of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The court gave the province of Ontario six months to amend its legislation. It also urged the other provinces to do so as well, to avoid the issue having to be litigated in each jurisdiction in order for the necessary changes to be effected.

While some provinces have moved quickly to follow the dictum of the Supreme Court, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland have not. Why not?

In New Brunswick, at least, many people are frequent churchgoers. As well, successive provincial governments of different

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Notice

Board Meeting

All FNBFA Board meetings are open to individual faculty members, and an invitation to attend is extended to anyone wishing to do so.

For more information concerning dates of upcoming board meetings, log on to: www.fnbfa.ca

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Tuition Fees Are Reaching A Crisis in N.B.

[Reprinted from the October 17th, 2002 edition of the Moncton Times-Transcript]

For The Record is a regular feature on the editorial page. Today's contributor is Dr. Claude Dionne, a full professor at l'Université de Moncton and president of the Federation of New Brunswick Faculty Associations.

This week's student strike at l'Université de Moncton to protest this year's unfortunately, predictable round of tuition fee increases sends a message to government which should not be ignored.

In the last ten years, the cost of tuition at l'Université de Moncton has skyrocketed by 86%, more than four times the increase of less than 20% in the Consumer Price Index over the same period.

Worse still, it has gone up by 57% in the last five years.

Students in other parts of the province have chosen various alternative means to drive home the point, but they all have the same legitimate complaint: rising tuition fees will soon render a university education once more the preserve of the lucky few who can afford to pay for one.

Tuition fees are not the only compulsory charges a student must pay to enroll. Added to them are various other inescapable administrative service charges, such as health insurance premiums, use-of-facilities fees, and the like. As a result, actual annual increases in the overall costs of admission tend to be understated.

Nowhere is the tuition fee situation worse than it is at l'Université de Moncton, but the problem is province-wide and needs to be addressed by government both immediately and realistically.

While the corresponding national average increase in the cost of admission to a Canadian university rose by four-and-a-half per cent in the 2002-2003 academic year, in New Brunswick as a whole it rose by nine-and-a-half per cent. However, at l'Université de Moncton it rose by an incredible twelve-and-a-half per cent.

In its recent report "Access Denied", the Canadian Association of University Teachers notes that tuition fees across the country are now higher than they have ever been. In fact, even after being adjusted for nearly 90 years of inflation, on average they are six times what they were in 1914.

One is at a loss, therefore, to understand how governments professing to have an education-driven agenda can continue to let this phenomenon occur year after year in our universities. The average New Brunswick student with a study-related debt load who graduated with a bachelor's degree in 2001 owed almost \$30,000.00 at graduation.

The students at l'Université de Moncton are not protesting against their cash-strapped administration. They are trying to draw the attention of governments to their own shortsightedness.

Communications Report

The Communications Committee has been extremely busy since its last report in August.

Below are some of the highlights:

-Our public awareness pamphlet *The State of University Education in New Brunswick and Canada/L'enseignement universitaire au Nouveau-Brunswick et au Canada* (attached) was sent out to all MLA's, New Brunswick MP's, and University Presidents, and was circulated successfully in both the Telegraph Journal and L'Acadie Nouvelle on Friday, September 27th. As a result of the

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political persuasions have recently given generous financial support to a private post-secondary education facility which has strong ties to religious communities throughout the province.

It certainly would make political sense, then, for any government to let the courts of the province declare such contentious provincial legislation to be unconstitutional and order it to be changed. Otherwise, it would risk alienating a considerable number of its churchgoing voters by voluntarily offering fundamental recognition to a segment of society whose lifestyle is anathema to them.

If that is the case in this province, such thinking is petty and small-minded. It certainly does not show leadership. Several New Brunswick physicians – many of them devoutly religious - refer patients for, and perform, abortions even though they themselves may not advocate abortion. They do so because, although they do not wish to adopt their patients' values, they also do not wish to dictate to them what those values should be.

Same-sex couples are equally entitled to enjoy a similar “live-and-let-live” attitude on the part of their government and the rest of us.

At the urging of the Supreme Court of Canada, most other provinces have moved to recognize and accommodate the reality of same-sex relationships. New Brunswick should not have to be dragged kicking and screaming into the 21st Century over this issue.

(Dr. Claude Dionne is a full professor at l'Université de Moncton and is President of the Federation of New Brunswick Faculty Associations.)

OPEN LETTER

The following is an open letter to faculty members from Prof. Ian H. Fraser (Psychology, St. Thomas University), Chair of the FNBFA Communications Committee

Dear colleagues,

Approximately nine years ago, I was made the President of FAUST (the Faculty Association of the University of St. Thomas.) At that time I did not truly appreciate or understand its necessity, but the influence of a trusted colleague, Dr. Gary Hughes, was enough to inspire me to become involved. As President, I quickly became aware of FAUST's importance – not only its specific importance to St. Thomas, but also the general importance of having such an organization in the first place. I then discovered that, as FAUST's president, I automatically became a board member of an association known as FNBFA (the Federation of New Brunswick Faculty Associations.) At the first board meeting of FNBFA, I carried a mandate from the executive of FAUST to ask the board of FNBFA to lower its membership fees. When I raised this suggestion at the meeting, the atmosphere among my faculty colleagues from other local associations was cool, to say the least. At the end of the meeting, however, Gwendolyn Creelman of MAFA (Mount Allison Faculty Association), the President of FNBFA took me aside and explained to me why my suggestion had encountered a negative response from my fellow board-members. On the strength of what she said, I decided to give FNBFA a second chance and have been involved with the organization ever since – eventually becoming its president (1996-99) and having chaired its Communications Committee since then.

So, what *is* the role and function of FNBFA? I think Dr. Gary Long, of APPBUMCE (l'Association des professeurs et professeurs et bibliothécaires de l'Université de Moncton, campus d'Edmundston), a past-president, said it best when he said that FNBFA is, first and foremost, an

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insurance policy. We all know we purchase insurance in the hope that we will never need it. However, knowing we have insurance, “just in case”, imparts a sense of security and well-being which allows us to proceed productively with the business of our lives or, in the case of FNBFA, the lives of our business. As president of FNBFA, however, I realized that FNBFA is also a sentinel, which guards our interests outside our particular institutions. In this day and age most faculty members have enough to keep them occupied within their own institutions without having to look over their shoulders. Inside a particular institution it is the job of the local association to stand sentinel; outside a particular institution it is the job of FNBFA and CAUT (the Canadian Association of University Teachers.) In this regard, FNBFA monitors the players who can affect the universities at the provincial level. This means acting both passively as watch-dogs and actively as lobbyists with the provincial government, the MPHEC (the Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission), and any other provincial agency organization which may suggest policies directly or indirectly affecting the universities within the province. At the federal level, faculty interests are represented by CAUT. With all these organizations intact we are covered at all levels and from all angles. However, if just one of these organizations should be missing, the results could be disastrous.

A case-in-point is the problem currently facing Nova Scotia’s university faculty. A few years ago, the provincial faculty organization in Nova Scotia was disbanded. Now, despite the fact that more than half of Nova Scotia’s faculty members, and all but one of its local associations, have seen the need to reconstitute it, a consensus as to what form the organization should take has been difficult to reach. During this hiatus, the voices of university faculty of Nova Scotia at the provincial level, and sometimes at the federal level, have been muted if not silenced. When the MPHEC has met to discuss such weighty topics as performance indicators and policy reviews, or the House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance conducted financial information gathering sessions, the unified voice of Nova Scotia faculty members has been conspicuous by its absence. Moreover, the sometime presence of individual Nova Scotia university associations instead has sometimes presented conflicting and divisive views. This sends a message to the government that faculty are not sure of what they want! Furthermore, without a provincial watch-dog, which represents every association, an unrepresented local association find out about pertinent provincial matters too late in the game to participate in a coordinated response of any kind.

Of course, you may ask yourself if there is any proof that FNBFA is performing its duties well. While there is no accurate way to measure the contributions that FNBFA has made to the New Brunswick university community, it is nevertheless a fact that, during the last ten years of provincial funding, while the overall unrestricted operating grant for Nova Scotia Universities **decreased** by more than 6%, the overall unrestricted operating grant for New Brunswick Universities **increased** by over 8%. I firmly believe that FNBFA played a vital role in helping to secure this overall increase in the unrestricted operating grant, during a decade of belt tightening, cut backs and debt reduction.

As I have outlined, it has become increasingly obvious to me that, in order to maintain a strong university environment that fosters faculty interests, it is essential to maintain the association of faculty at all three levels: local, provincial and federal. I hope you agree.

Ian Fraser

For more information about FNBFA, please visit the web site at www.fnbfa.ca or www.fappunb.ca

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Thanks to its Chair, Prof. Ian Fraser, the report of the Communications Committee in this issue of the Bulletin contains a comprehensive summary of the Federation's most recent accomplishments, and any comments I might make here in that regard would merely cover the same ground.

However, I would draw to your attention the Federation's recent brief to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance [See this page - **Ed.**] in which we were able to incorporate the contents of the public information pamphlet which we prepared and distributed throughout the province in September.

I have found this issue to be particularly informative, and hope you will enjoy reading it as much as I have.

Best wishes for the 2002-2003 academic year.

Claude Dionne
President

Brief of the Federation of New Brunswick Faculty Associations

The Federation is pleased to have been again invited to make a submission to the Standing Committee on Finance.

Recently, great strides have been made by our federal government in providing meaningful financial support for our universities. However, just about all of this support has gone to research or research-related endeavours, and the ultimate outcome will be predictably disappointing. Why?

The old adage "you can't sell from an empty wagon" is, it seems, the basis for an infinite number of adaptations. In the present circumstances, one of those adaptations could be "you can't conduct world-class research in a run-down environment".

As a result, while not wishing to look a gift horse in the mouth, nevertheless the university community must mute its applause for the current federal enthusiasm for ground-breaking undertakings on the part of Canada's universities.

The Federation of New Brunswick Faculty Associations (FNBFA) was recently privileged to participate in the Innovation Strategy Symposium sponsored by Industry Canada on June 26 last in Moncton.

Two of the four topics identified by Industry Canada for discussion as "challenges" to a successful national innovation strategy were "Creating [and marketing] New Knowledge", and "Developing Skills for the New Economy".

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Despite the emphasis on the place which the universities are, seemingly, expected to take in the vanguard of innovation, the FNBFA delegation was disappointed that the allocation of commensurate levels of “core funding” for them – in short, that which keeps their regular monthly bills paid – was wholly absent from the agenda of the Hearings until the FNBFA raised the issue.

The “Skills Challenge” was identified in the symposium materials as follows:

“Ensuring that, in years to come, Canada has enough highly qualified people with the skills for a vibrant, knowledge-based economy”.

This high-minded rhetoric is, therefore, greeted with some skepticism by the university community of small province such as New Brunswick, which does not enjoy the economies of scale of its counterparts in the more populous and prosperous parts of Canada. Although our federal government does not directly underwrite the operating costs of the nation’s universities, any alteration of the federal-provincial systems of transfer payments (from which, indirectly, the bulk of their operating funding still flows in the smaller provinces) has a profound and lasting effect on the bottom lines of their universities.

Hence, the abandonment early in the last decade of the **Established Programmes Financing Act (EPF)** formula in favour of the **Canada Health and Social Transfer (CHST)** formula has caused serious financial strictures in New Brunswick, and elsewhere, which the university community is in a constant struggle to accommodate.

Consequently, this call for the submission of briefs to the Committee is most timely. At this time, the Federation is involved in a public awareness campaign to draw the attention of Members of Parliament, Members of the New Brunswick Legislative Assembly, and the general public to the problems created in the university community, both locally and nationally, by years of underfunding. The focal point of this campaign will be an information pamphlet, in both official languages, which will be distributed throughout New Brunswick within the next few days, and which reads as follows:

DID YOU KNOW...

- That the average first-year employment income of a Canadian university graduate is higher than the average annual income of all wage earners combined?

- That the unemployment rate for university graduates in New Brunswick fell by 20 per cent between 1998 and 2001?

- That one in every four new jobs created in Canada between 1999 and 2004 will require a university degree?

- That university tuition fees in New Brunswick in 2002 will be almost twice what they were in 1992?

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- That the average New Brunswick student with a study-related debt load, who graduated with a Bachelor's degree in 2001, owed almost \$30,000.00 at graduation?
- That there are now 10 per cent fewer university faculty in New Brunswick than there were in 1990, even though there are 7.5 per cent more students?
- That 25 per cent of all our Ph.D. graduates, our major source of replacement faculty, leave Canada within two years of graduation?
- That the ratio of university students to faculty in Canada in 1971 was only 23-to-one, but in 2001 was 39-to-one?
- That Canadian universities not only produce as many inventions as their counterparts in the United States, but also create 2.5 times more spin-off companies than American universities per dollar spent on research?
- That between 1993 and 2000, government funding per student for university research and teaching in Canada fell by 13%, while it increased by 20% in the United States?
- That in the United States, Great Britain, France, Australia and New Zealand, between 22 and 25 per cent of 18-to-21 year-olds are enrolled in universities, compared with only 18 per cent in Canada?
- That 90 per cent of Canadians believe that, after health care, education should be government's highest priority?

The foregoing statistics clearly demonstrate that our university system is in crisis. In fact, the only recent development which has served to mitigate the situation they portray has been the increased federal participation in research, discussed in the opening paragraph of this document, since the year 2000.

It must, though, be emphasised that, welcome as it is, this new-found commitment to research on the part of our federal government is a two-edged sword. Good research requires good infrastructure, and the existence of the latter must be guaranteed for the former to be fruitful. It must, though, be emphasised that, welcome as it is, this new-found commitment to research on the part of our federal government is a two-edged sword. Good research requires good infrastructure, and the existence of the latter must be guaranteed for the former to be fruitful.

We trust that the members of the Committee will reflect on the foregoing in the coming weeks, and that it will provide the basis for productive discussion between the Committee and the representatives of the Federation when the Committee holds its public hearings later this Fall.

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campaign the Communications Committee Chair was interviewed that day on the CBC radio program “Maritime Noon”.

-There have been some changes made to the web site, including an updated and more comprehensive list of organizations in our “useful links” section. Thanks go to our web master, Jack Vanderlinde, for all his efforts in this regard.

-There also will be a new section on the web site entitled “Communications” which will consist of an update by the Communications Chair on the various public awareness campaigns we have launched.

-In response to a request for action from l’ABPPUM, the Federation had a Guest Column article published in the Telegraph Journal on Saturday, September 28th entitled: *N.B. Must Get In Step With Same-Sex Relationships* [See page 1 Ed.]

-The student strikes at l’Université de Moncton (Moncton and Edmundston) gave us the opportunity to produce an editorial entitled *Tuition Fees Are Reaching A Crisis in N.B.* which was published on October 17th in the Moncton Times-Transcript. [See page 2 - Ed.]

-We are continuing to have our advertisement placed on the front page of “Showtime”, the Telegraph Journal’s TV Guide, every Friday. The Friday circulation of the Telegraph Journal is their largest with a total circulation of 50,000+. The factual statements in the advertisements change every two weeks.

-The latest monthly report on the website showed we have had 5,550 unique visitors with a total of almost 31,000 hits. It appears that the series of public awareness campaigns launched over the last few months (ie., the bookmark, portfolio, pamphlet and ad campaigns) are beginning to bear fruit.

Ian Fraser, Chair.

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Your Opinions are Welcomed

A special invitation is extended to those members of local associations who are interested in commenting upon university life in general. Readers are invited to send their opinions and/or comments, in writing, to the address above.

Opinions expressed in the Bulletin are not necessarily those of the Executive and/or Board of FNBFA/FAPPUNB