

Students will march

By SUSAN REED
Brunswickan Staff

A student protest march by the UNB Student Union is planned for Wednesday at 1 p.m. Students protesting proposed federal government financial aid cuts will gather at the SUB and proceed along University Avenue to their destination, the New Brunswick Legislature building.

The march comes as a result of the New Brunswick Universities Anti-Cutbacks Conference September 19. Assistant SRC Comptroller Andy Young attended the conference and brought back a report urging UNB's participation in the planned united march of protest in the provincial capitals of each of the Atlantic universities next Wednesday.

SRC President Kevin Ratcliff is calling for a huge student turnout. He said that had the senate been meeting, he would have asked it to cancel classes Wednesday afternoon.

The proposed budget cuts come in the form of the Established Programs Financing plan. Basically, the federal government transfers funding to the provinces to support those areas covered by the EPF. These are hospital insurance, medicare and post-secondary education. But the provinces do not have to spend the money on the areas it is intended for. Thus in 1981-82, government operating assistance in New Brunswick as approved by the provincial government, was set at \$76 million dollars. The actual post-secondary education allocation from EPF was \$100,867,000. Note the discrepancy.

EPF was to have been re-negotiated in 1982, but according to the conference report, "... Trudeau has contradicted and

unilaterally declared that the cuts will take effect when the budget is introduced in October of this year."

The Toronto Star reports that Ottawa will cut two billion dollars from its transfer payments to the provinces.

The report from the universities conference goes on to claim that proposed cuts in the EPF will ultimately be passed on to the students and that in the future we will see tuition fees double.

University President James Downey maintains that it is premature to speculate on the effect of budget cuts on tuition costs. As EPF is passed on by the province, it is possible the province would try to maintain its support. Should the cuts be passed onto the university, he said, possible options to cope would include increasing tuition dramatically or cutting academic programs.

Downey said he hopes funding will remain at a high level. He said he feels there is a commitment from both federal and provincial governments to provide post-secondary education not merely to a small group in society but also to those lower on the socio-economic scale.

What is the ultimate effectiveness of a protest march? Downey suggests that a well-directed protest, with both issue and target clearly delineated, shows the politicians something that they, as elected representatives, have to pay attention to.

The march will be forming at 1 p.m. Wednesday at the back of the SUB.

NOTE: This article wishes to acknowledge "Established Program Financing" by Mike McNeil of the National Union of Students as a source of background material.



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Photo by Christopher W.M. Chan

The new cafeteria