Academic Matters

OCUFA'S JOURNAL OF HIGHER EDUCATION
LA REVUE D'ENSEIGNEMENT SUPÉRIEUR D'UAPUO

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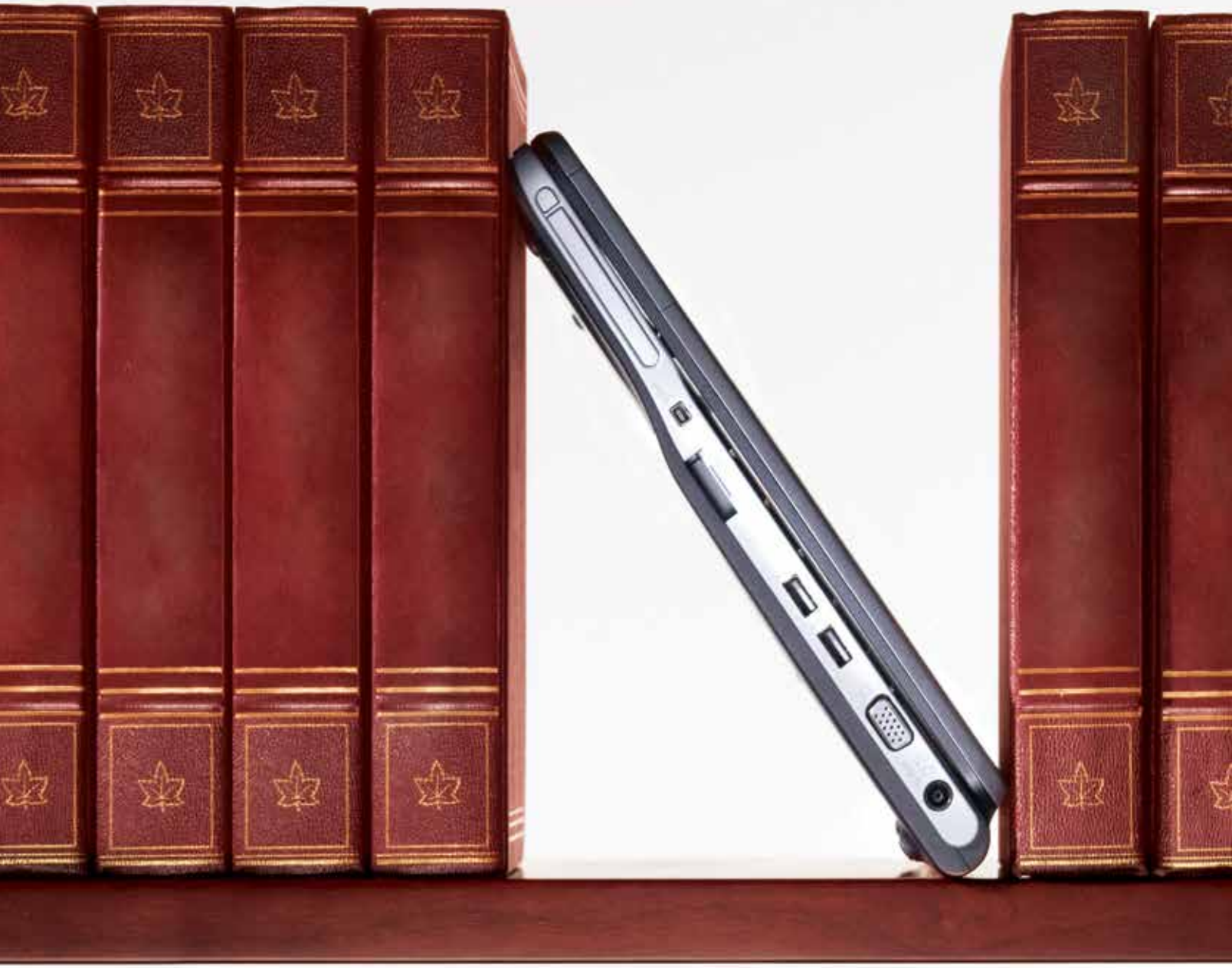

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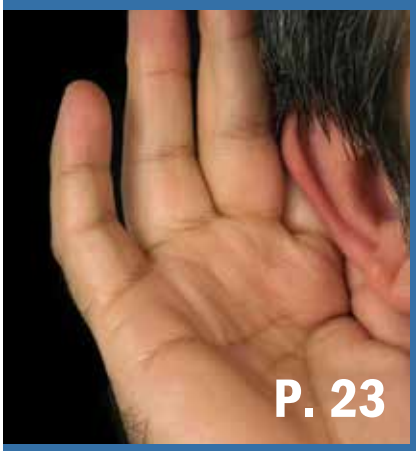

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Academic Matters is published two times a year by OCUFA, and is received by 17,000 professors, academic librarians and others interested in higher education issues across Canada. The journal explores issues of relevance to higher education in Ontario, other provinces in Canada, and globally. It is intended to be a forum for thoughtful and thought-provoking, original and engaging discussion of current trends in post secondary education and consideration of academe's future direction.

Readers are encouraged to contribute their views, ideas and talents. Letters to the editor (maximum 250 words) are welcome and may be edited for length. To provide an article or artwork for Academic Matters, please send your query to Editor-in-Chief Graeme Stewart at gstewart@ocufa.on.ca.

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Letters to the Editor

The article on "The Massive Open Online Professor" stimulated a lively online discussion.

I share the same vision of future MOOCs that you describe in the two paragraphs after the heading "What will it be like to learn with these new approaches?": [Online courses that] incorporate adaptive learning, problem-based learning, lifelong learning, formative assessment, and mentoring.

I just think if you look at the courses that have been offered this year, we have a long way to get to that ideal. Even though some Udacity courses do have various levels of some of the elements: projects, some formative assessment (little quizzes after videos), and informal mentoring/support in the forums. It will be great to see courses designed for remedial topics and designed for students who traditionally struggle with science, math, or writing. Over 60% of students who start out in science & engineering majors at college drop out or change majors, and 90% of them cite poor teaching as the reason. Right now I'm not sure MOOCs are ready to help that population—if anything it may frustrate them more when they try a Stanford or MIT calculus or circuits class online, for example, that people take pride in how tough it is, and doesn't provide scaffolding or multimedia or so forth to help with conceptual understanding."
Doug Holton

"After 17 years of teaching courses on the web—I started in the spring of 1995 with the first course ever taught on the web—my concern is that this model (video lectures, video chats, etc.) excludes the majority of the potential students in the US and around the world. We need to recognize that most connections are slow and most are made over a phone. It is possible to design educational material which will work for the majority, but the models outlined [in the article] won't."
Jerrold Maddox

"The open education movement is clearly going to be a powerful force in education reform. Reading this article, however, made me realize that within the movement itself there are at least two contradictory views of the role of instructors within the educational process. The two sides are best represented by Sebastian Thrun on the one hand, and Salman Khan on the other."
Matthew Roberts

"Great article about the expansion of online higher education. However, academic policies of Canadian universities must change as the current practices employed by Canadian universities are governed primarily by academic snobbery rather than an approach to open learning. For example, I have been a student in the distance program at University of Manitoba for the past two years. Unfortunately its program does not provide final year courses in my discipline. Instead, you are referred to the Canadian Virtual University to complete courses through partnered universities. The catch is that the University of Manitoba will not approve any final year courses offered by distance at other institutions, including its partner institutions at the Canadian Virtual University. In my experience I was left with the choice of a 12 hour drive to Winnipeg once per week for eight months, or accepting that I have amassed several thousand dollars in student loans with nothing to show for it at the end because completing a degree is not possible.

Online study is a great way to increase accessibility and standards can be built into these programs, but until we confront universities that confuse exuding high standards with academic snobbery, university education will remain as inaccessible to distance students as it was before the advent of online study."
Brent

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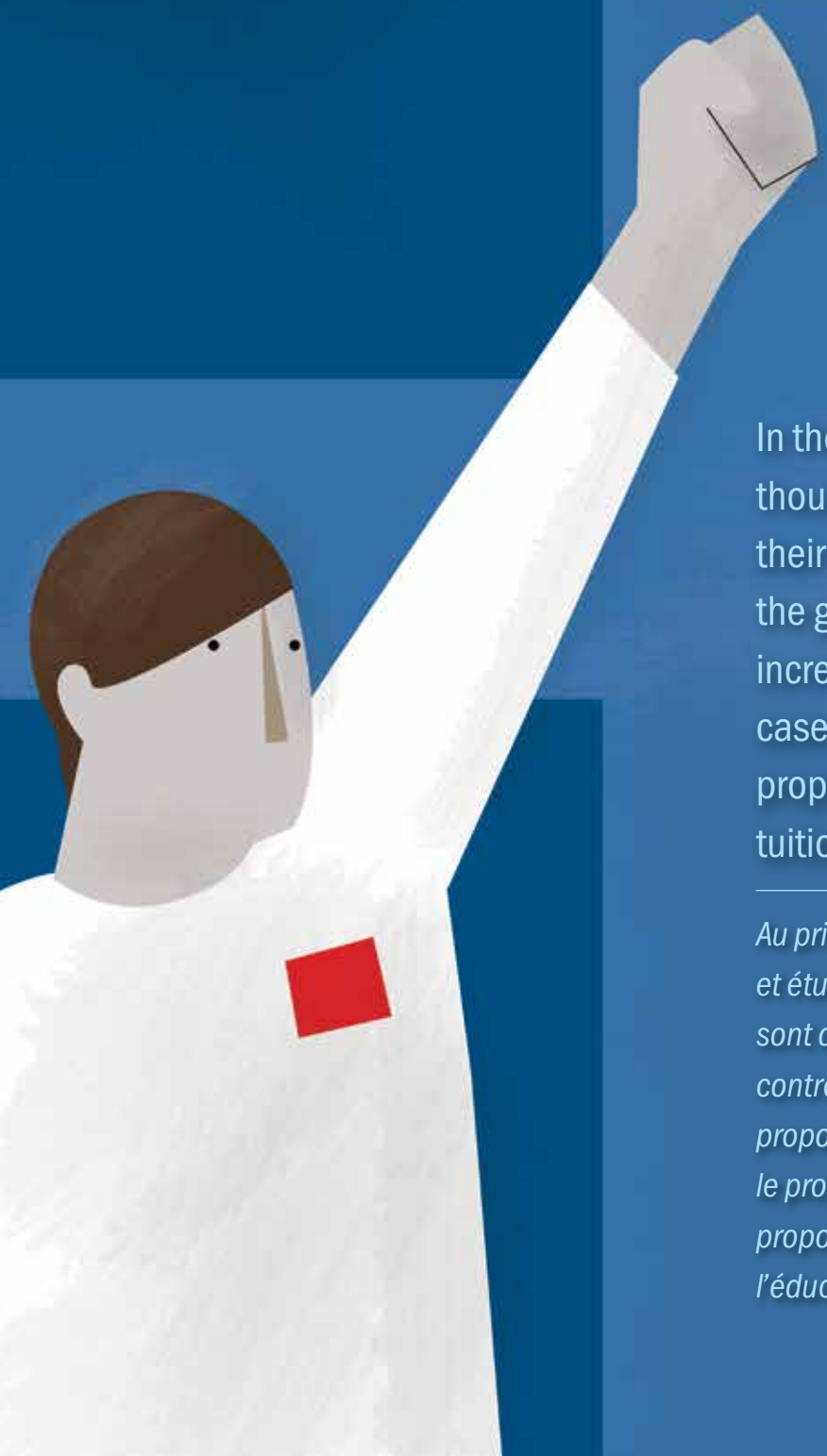
"ENSEMBLE, BLOQUONS LA HAUSSE": The Rationale Behind the Slogan

Martin Robert



In the spring of 2012 hundreds of thousands of Quebec students and their allies took to the streets to protest the government's proposed tuition fee increase. Martin Robert makes the case against the tuition increase and proposes an alternative model in which tuition would be free in Quebec.

Au printemps 2012, des milliers d'étudiants et étudiantes québecois(es) et leurs alliés sont descendus dans la rue pour manifester contre la hausse des frais de scolarité qu'a proposée le gouvernement. Martin Robert fait le procès de la hausse des frais de scolarité et propose un autre modèle dans le cadre duquel l'éducation serait gratuite au Québec.

A $1625 tuition increase over five years (2012-2017) was announced in the Quebec budget of March 2011 and was scheduled to take effect in September, 2012. Quebec's student movement organized quickly to oppose the increase, yet local student associations waited for strategic reasons until February of 2012 before voting on mandates for an open-ended general strike (i.e. a strike of indefinite duration that would include a significant number of student unions in Quebec). From there, after the first votes succeeded, the strike movement spread like wildfire. And thanks to the unprecedented determination of the strikers, it ended up being the longest, most widespread, most media-reported (and most repressed) student strike in the province's history.

Only historians, perhaps, will someday be able to explain this rather incredible alignment of the stars. I, for my part, will present the arguments that CLASSE (the Coalition large de l'Association pour une solidarité syndicale étudiante—the national student association that played the most decisive role in waging this year's student strike in Quebec) put forward in the tuition debate. CLASSE represented the first local organizations to take the plunge in February and according to the Système d'information sur la grève générale illimitée, it represented 53.8% of the strikers until the adoption of Bill 78—the government's controversial and draconian anti-protest law—on May 17, 2012.

The first section of this article deals with the rationale behind CLASSE's position against rising tuition, while the second section summarizes what CLASSE actually proposes as an alternative to the increase, including the ways in which we could eventually implement free post-secondary education in Quebec.

CLASSE and IRIS: Silencing the Siren Song of the Free Market

Two documents describe the main arguments used by CLASSE in its campaign against a tuition increase. The first is CLASSE's official "argumentaire" for 2011–2012. The second is a brochure written by a progressive research institute in Quebec called l'Institut de recherche et d'information socio-économiques (IRIS), that explains in eight simple arguments why "no" should be the answer to the question, "do we really need to raise tuition fees?" These documents refute the three key pro-increase arguments:

Argument 1: A fee increase is the only way to bail out the universities so that they can maintain quality education.

First, according to CLASSE and IRIS, underfunding is not a problem for universities in Quebec. Indeed, CLASSE points out that since 2003-2004, the annual operating subsidies paid by the government to universities actually increased from $1.9 billion to $2.9 billion. That said, as IRIS writes, "[t]he amount of grants and research contracts allocated to universities has more than doubled from 1995–1996 to 2005–2006, swelling from $721 million to $1.276 billion in constant 2006 dollars." More money goes into universities than ever, IRIS concludes, but that money is spent mainly on research activities, especially in the flourishing sector of commercially-oriented research. Universities therefore do not suffer from underfunding, IRIS and CLASSE argue, but are actually misallocating their funding (transferring funds within universities to the detriment of teaching and operating budgets).

Second, for IRIS and CLASSE, higher tuition does not necessarily mean higher quality education. In fact, since a tuition fee increase means students incur more debt and must spend more time doing paid work, higher tuition is likely to reduce the overall time students spend studying. Teachers may consequently have to lower their evaluation standards to maintain acceptable grade point averages in their classes. Far from improving the quality of education, rising tuition may have the exact opposite effect.

Argument 2: Higher tuition will have no impact on university participation.

IRIS argues that this is patently false, estimating that increasing tuition to match the Canadian average (which roughly corresponds to the announced increase), would deny 30,000 students access to university studies. IRIS also points out the internal contradiction inherent in the Quebec government's claims that increased hydro-electricity fees will help to reduce energy consumption, but that an increase in tuition fees will not affect higher education participation rates.

IRIS also says that students should not count on the government's financial assistance program to offset the increase for all students. A startling 83% of students will be ineligible for the program, even when initial improvements proposed by the government are taken into account. In an attempt to satisfy the strikers, the government did grant additional funds for financial assistance; this, however, did not impress the Advisory Committee on the Financial Accessibility of Education (or the student strikers), which expressed concerns that this assistance would primarily consist of new loans, thereby increasing student debt.

Furthermore, CLASSE and IRIS point out that in addition to its negative effect on university participation, the tuition increase may transform the socio-economic composition of the student population, as it may lead to an underrepresentation of lower-income individuals in post-secondary education. IRIS points out that many students will agree to go into more debt in order to pay their tuition, but this will likely influence their career choices—they will increasingly be forced to choose programs based on employment prospects rather than personal preferences.

For Iris and CLASSE, people's principles and values should determine their economic choices, and not the other way around.

Argument 3: Higher tuition fees will ensure that students pay their fair share in tuition.

This is, without a doubt, the main argument used by the government to defend the tuition increase. In the government's *A Fair and Balanced University Funding Plan*, the Minister of Finance explained that, "the tuition fee increase [would] bring these fees to the level they were at in 1968, if inflation were taken into account."

From the outset, IRIS challenged that notion of "fair share" by asking why an increase in tuition would necessarily be fairer than low tuition or even free education. As for the choice of 1968 as a year of reference to establish today's "fair share," IRIS finds it rather arbitrary. The public network of universities in Quebec was only founded in 1969. IRIS notes that if we consider the increase in the proportion of the provincial budget dedicated to university funding that resulted from the creation of public universities, "it is no surprise that the share of funding provided by tuition fees has fallen over the years." That said, IRIS proposes another method to evaluate the fairness of tuition for students: instead of comparing past and present tuition rates, we should compare the number of working hours at minimum wage that would be necessary to pay for tuition in the past as compared to the present. IRIS calculates that, "with the expected increase, students will have to work twice as long as students in the 1970s to pay off their education." Needless to say, IRIS believes the assumptions behind the government's "fair share" argument are misleading at best.

Moreover, CLASSE notes that the "fair share" argument suggests that the freezing of tuition fees in Quebec from 1968 to 1990 and from 1994 to 2007 was a historical mistake to be corrected. The Liberals seemed to suggest that every government in power over that period had somehow ignored the fact that the share paid by students in tuition was not a fair one. Such a dishonest argument must be denounced, CLASSE argued, as it failed to acknowledge the social choice that was explicitly made in Quebec in the 1960s (see, for example, the famous Parent Report) to consider education a common good to be funded collectively through taxes to ensure accessibility for all. CLASSE concludes straightforwardly: "for us, the answer to, *'What is the students' "fair share"?'* is simple: "to devote themselves to their studies seriously, then, when entering the labour market, to participate in the collective financial effort at the height of their financial capacity through the tax system."

In short, IRIS and CLASSE reject the "fair share" argument by affirming it is nebulous, based on misleading assessments and, most of all, carries an individualistic and consumerist conception of education which runs contrary to the spirit of post-secondary education in Quebec since the 1960s.

Taken together, the counter-arguments presented in these three points form the vision of education and society advocated by IRIS and CLASSE. According to this vision, the primary purpose of education is not solely to serve the labour market and national economic competitiveness. Rather, education should develop citizens who can think critically, and develop professionals with a broad education who are not shackled by overspecialization. For Iris and CLASSE, people's principles and values should determine their economic choices, and not the other way around. Not only is this model desirable, but it is also economically feasible.

CLASSE's solution: free tuition

On April 27th, 2012, the Quebec government introduced a "package deal" of proposals in an attempt to resolve the student conflict, which at that point had already gone on for more than two months. Notably, it offered to spread the

tuition increase over seven years instead of five and to implement modest improvements to the financial assistance program. CLASSE considered this offer to be insufficient with regard to the movement's demands and leverage and rejected it, alongside all of Quebec's national student unions. CLASSE then responded with a counter-offer.

First, CLASSE proposed transferring $142 million in commercially-oriented research funding to teaching, without affecting basic research funding. CLASSE expected that this would serve to effectively reduce the private sector outsourcing of research and development to universities that has been on the rise since 2000. CLASSE believes that as a consequence of this reallocation of funds, universities would be allowed to once again honour their core mission of freely imparting knowledge through teaching.

Second, CLASSE observed that, as a result of the growing competition between universities, universities dedicate considerable portions of their budgets to advertising campaigns. CLASSE estimates that over the last five years, universities in Quebec invested a total of $80 million in advertising. If such commercial expenses were banned, CLASSE argues, universities could annually invest $18 million in teaching instead.

CLASSE thus calculates that these two measures combined would make available a sum of $160 million—the same amount of funds expected to be raised through the tuition increase, making the policy unnecessary.

Yet CLASSE did not stop there. To ensure that this $160 million would not be reallocated to anything other than access to education and teaching, it proposed three other measures. First, it demanded a freeze on university executives' wages, which have exploded in recent years. CLASSE believes the increase in Quebec Universities (UQ) executives' wages by 83% between 1997 and 2004, is excessive. Second, CLASSE demanded a moratorium on the construction of university satellite campuses, which have mushroomed in recent years. Although they generate substantial costs, CLASSE claims that there is no evidence that they have a positive effect on university participation. Third, echoing the claims of many teacher unions in Quebec, CLASSE asks that national États généraux on education be convened with various civil society representatives. On the occasion of such a meeting, CLASSE would advocate for the introduction of free tuition fees at all school levels. This would be paid for by the introduction, over five years, of a 7% tax on capital for financial institutions only. In Quebec, financial institutions actually pay less in taxes than all other types of corporations, despite making record profits in recent years. For CLASSE, that new tax would allow the state to recover $410 million, which is exactly the cost of free education according to l'Institut de recherche en économie contemporaine (IREC).

Basically, CLASSE believes that Quebec has the financial means necessary to completely abolish tuition fees for education, and that the government should urgently do so to preserve the core mission of education and ensure greater social justice.

Conclusion: for they know what they do

It is quite possible, for various reasons, to disagree with the positions defended by CLASSE during the strike of 2012. However, no one can accuse CLASSE of not having shown constant concern to document, articulate and popularize its positions on rising tuition fees in Quebec. The authors of the IRIS document referred to above, namely Simon Tremblay Pepin and Éric Martin, actually presented their arguments against the increase at dozens of conferences throughout Quebec prior to the strike. Éric Martin even elaborated upon those arguments in a short book entitled, *Université Inc.*, that he wrote with Maxime Ouellet, also from IRIS, and which has reached a fairly large readership in Quebec. CLASSE, for its part, in addition to the workshops it regularly holds for students, spent the whole summer of 2012 traveling across Quebec with its Nous sommes avenir popular education tour.

In this regard, and despite having been the target of a de-legitimization campaign by some media, CLASSE made it possible for the 2012 student strike to build deep ideological opposition to the tuition increase. For many students, the strike was the first time in their lives that they were given the opportunity to consider seriously their political values and choose a side. And while it may not have been fully grasped by all, this rise in political consciousness has been felt throughout Quebec and may transform the political history of the province in ways we have not yet imagined. AM

Martin Robert has been active in the Association pour une solidarité syndicale étudiante (ASSÉ) - which became CLASSE for the 2012 student strike - where he was elected to the research and publications committees. He is pursuing a master's degree in History at the Université du Québec à Montreal (UQAM).

Signification du carré vert : RAISON POUR LAQUELLE DE NOMBREUX ÉTUDIANTS SONT OPPOSÉS À LA GRÈVE

Arielle Grenier

Arguments against the tuition fee increase are seen by some students to be unrealistic. Arielle Grenier argues that the funding of higher education must take into account the realities of Quebec's fiscal situation and the significant burden already borne by Quebec taxpayers.

Les arguments contre la hausse des frais de scolarité sont perçus par certains étudiants comme étant irréalistes. Arielle Grenier soutient que le financement des études supérieures doit tenir compte des réalités de la situation financière du Québec et du lourd fardeau qu'assument déjà les contribuables du Québec.

An English version of this article is available at www.AcademicMatters.ca.

Le 30 mars 2011, le ministre des Finances du Québec, Raymond Bachand, annonçait que les étudiants devraient payer davantage pour leurs études universitaires, et que le financement des universités avait besoin d'une contribution plus élevée de la part des étudiants. À la suite de cette annonce, les associations étudiantes du Québec ont décidé de parler au nom de l'ensemble des étudiants, comme si, par pure magie, tous les étudiants avaient la même opinion.

Des étudiants pour la hausse? Le commencement.

C'est dans cet esprit qu'en novembre 2011, Marc Antoine Morin et moi avons décidé de nous engager dans un débat public au sujet des frais de scolarité. Il était temps que toutes les voix des étudiants se fassent entendre. Nous ne pouvions encore laisser aux associations étudiantes le mandat de parler au nom de *tous* les étudiants. Il fallait réagir. Alors que les associations étudiantes et le mouvement syndical étudiant se préparaient à une manifestation étudiante contre la hausse des frais de scolarité, monsieur Morin et moi-même avons décidé de créer une page Facebook qui incitait les étudiants à manifester *pour* la hausse des frais.

Au quotidien, personne n'aime voir ses dépenses augmenter et c'est logique. Cependant, les dépenses réelles qui augmentent sans arrêt sont celles des contribuables québécois. Selon l'Institut Économique de Montréal, « la dette du Québec s'élève à plus de 50 000 dollars par travailleur, elle augmente de plus de 20 millions par jour, une dette qui place le Québec au 5e rang des nations les plus endettées au monde ». En fin de compte, ce sont les contribuables québécois qui sont victimes de cette dette, créée par l'incapacité d'un gouvernement de contrôler ses dépenses. Le ministère de l'Éducation du Québec, créé en 1964, gère un budget annuel de 15,5 milliards de dollars, soit l'équivalent de 25 pour cent des dépenses pour les programmes du gouvernement québécois. La part des contribuables est très élevée dans l'éducation des étudiants québécois, soit plus que 60 pour cent.

Pourquoi indexer et hausser les frais de scolarité?

Les étudiants contre la hausse affirment que les universités ne sont pas sous-financées. Selon l'Institut de recherches et d'informations socio-économiques « En combinant ce que le gouvernement, les étudiants et le privé investissent dans les universités, on obtient un total de 29 242 $ de dépenses par étudiant au Québec, comparativement à 26 383 $ pour l'Ontario et à 28 735 $ pour le reste du Canada. En regard des pays de l'OCDE, seuls les États-Unis et la Corée du Sud devancent le Québec au poste de la dépense globale par étudiant ». Mais la différence entre les dépenses globales par étudiant s'explique en partie par les différences structurelles entre les systèmes d'enseignement, dont celles liées à la composition de l'effectif étudiant par cycle et par domaine d'études. Ainsi, le fait que les universités du Québec aient une proportion plus élevée d'étudiants inscrits dans les secteurs disciplinaires les plus coûteux et aux cycles d'études universitaires supérieurs explique en partie leur dépense par étudiant plus élevée qu'en Ontario. De plus, le personnel de soutien est très fortement syndiqué dans les universités du Québec.

Les étudiants contre la hausse affirment aussi que le gouvernement se désengage financièrement de l'éducation supérieure. Ce n'est pas le cas. Le gouvernement entend augmenter son financement de 430 millions de dollars d'ici 2015 pour atteindre un financement total de 850 millions : le reste sera complété par les étudiants et par des entreprises privées.

Les étudiants qui sont en faveur de la hausse ne sont pas convaincus par le point de vue ni par les arguments des associations contre la hausse pour les raisons suivantes :

Premièrement, les frais de scolarité au Québec sont en moyenne de 2 415 $, soit 47 pour cent de ce que l'étudiant moyen canadien doit verser et 38 pour cent de ce que l'étudiant moyen paie en Ontario selon les données de Statistique Canada. Les étudiants québécois bénéficient également des frais de scolarité les plus bas au pays, suivis de Terre-Neuve (2 624 $), tandis que la prochaine province sur la liste se situe déjà à 3 588 $ (Manitoba). Selon le Ministre Bachand, même après la hausse de 1 625 $, un étudiant paiera en 2016 le même montant qu'un étudiant payait en 1968, ce chiffre tenant compte de l'inflation. Les frais de scolarité augmentent déjà en moyenne de 150 $ par année au Canada. Même avec la hausse de 325 $ par an, en supposant que la hausse de 150 $ se maintienne dans le reste du pays, les frais de scolarité québécois atteindraient dans cinq ans 4 040 $, nous plaçant au deuxième rang au Canada, sur le plan de l'abordabilité, après Terre-Neuve. Même si nous nous fions aux estimations les plus pessimistes, qui prévoient plutôt que les frais de scolarité atteindront 4 700 $ dans cinq ans, le Québec demeurerait l'une des provinces où l'éducation est la moins onéreuse au pays, en troisième place.

Deuxièmement, les données de Statistique Canada indiquent aussi qu'un étudiant détenant un baccalauréat gagnera en moyenne 21 627 $ de plus par an que celui qui n'est pas titulaire d'un diplôme universitaire, soit 756 945 $ en supposant une vie active de 35 ans. Ce seul revenu additionnel permet à un étudiant de rembourser 13 fois le

coût total de la hausse des frais de scolarité sur la durée d'un baccalauréat en *un* an de travail, sans compter que les titulaires d'un baccalauréat ont un taux d'emploi supérieur de cinq pour cent à ceux qui n'ont qu'un diplôme d'études secondaires. Les avantages financiers que procure l'obtention d'un diplôme d'études postsecondaires sont donc majeurs en comparaison de la pénalité financière qui découle de la hausse des frais de scolarité.

Troisièmement, le nombre d'étudiants inscrits aux universités québécoises a augmenté en moyenne de 1 140 étudiants par an au cours des cinq dernières années, bien que les frais de scolarité réels aient augmenté de 150 $ par an en moyenne selon les données de Statistique Canada. La corrélation entre la hausse des frais de scolarité et la baisse de la fréquentation universitaire n'est donc pas présente ici. Le taux de fréquentation de l'université par les personnes de 15 à 64 ans est de 4,9 pour cent au Québec et également de 4,9 pour cent en Ontario, bien que les frais de scolarité soient 263 pour cent plus élevés en Ontario. Encore une fois, la corrélation entre l'accessibilité aux études et les frais de scolarité n'est pas observée. Dans la même veine, une étude de 2004 de l'Institut Économique de Montréal conclut que « les données disponibles pour les provinces canadiennes n'indiquent en effet aucune relation directe entre le niveau des frais de scolarité et l'accessibilité aux études universitaires ». Il n'est donc pas réaliste d'affirmer que la hausse des frais de scolarité frappera durement l'accessibilité aux études postsecondaires.

Quatrièmement, les données de Statistique Canada indiquent que les études étaient subventionnées au Québec, en 2009, à 59 pour cent à même les fonds provinciaux et à 10,2 pour cent à même les fonds fédéraux. En Ontario, en comparaison, la contribution du provincial est de 37,3 pour cent et celle du fédéral, de neuf pour cent. Il est donc faux de dire que le gouvernement ne contribue pas déjà au financement des universités québécoises.

Cinquièmement, les dépenses administratives représentent 18 pour cent des dépenses des universités et collèges québécois, par rapport à 20 pour cent pour la moyenne canadienne selon les données de Statistique Canada. Il est donc faux de dire que nos universités souffrent d'une mauvaise gestion chronique qui gonflerait la note des étudiants. Les universités et collèges québécois investissent 49,6 pour cent de leurs dépenses directement dans l'éducation, montant légèrement supérieur à la moyenne canadienne de 47,9 pour cent. Il est donc faux de dire que les fonds affectés au secteur seraient détournés et utilisés à des fins autres que celle de subvenir directement aux besoins éducatifs des étudiants.

Solutions des carrés rouges de la CLASSE

Les solutions et demandes présentées par la CLASSE (Coalition large de l'Association pour une solidarité syndicale étudiante), une association étudiante ayant plusieurs liens avec les syndicats du Québec, ne sont pas réalistes compte tenu du contexte économique. En outre, ce qu'elle propose aurait des conséquences néfastes pour l'éducation postsecondaire québécoise.

La CLASSE demandait non seulement le gel des frais de scolarité, mais également une éducation gratuite pour tous les étudiants d'université. Pour combler le sous-financement des universités québécoises, cette association économiquement incompétente demandait le 3 mai 2012 que les fonds de recherche servent à financer le gel. Elle demandait également l'interdiction de la publicité faite par les universités, ce qui donnerait lieu à une épargne permettant de consacrer 18 millions supplémentaires aux 142 millions affectés aux fonds de recherche pour financer le gel. Le ridicule ne se termine pas encore. La CLASSE souhaite également un gel des salaires et de l'embauche des cadres et du rectorat, ainsi qu'un moratoire sur la construction et l'agrandissement de campus satellites.

Si la solution proposée par la CLASSE semble être logique pour ses membres, il en est tout autrement pour la réalité économique du Québec. Ce que propose la CLASSE ne s'inscrit pas dans un esprit de concurrence mondiale. Étudier dans un environnement qui n'est pas concurrentiel risquerait fortement de provoquer une baisse de la valeur du diplôme. Les fonds de recherche doivent servir à attirer de meilleurs professeurs et chercheurs, pas à rendre nos étudiants moins responsables de la dette contractée pour leurs études universitaires.

Le modèle américain d'éducation postsecondaire ne serait certainement pas souhaité ni souhaitable pour la CLASSE. Dans la société utopique de cette association étudiante, l'*Ivy League* n'existerait probablement pas puisqu'elle traduit l'idée de commercialisation de l'éducation selon nos syndicalistes en herbe. La CLASSE considère l'éducation

comme étant un bien public et, animée par ce raisonnement, elle croit fermement que les étudiants devraient tous avoir la chance de fréquenter l'université. Le problème de ce raisonnement c'est que, malheureusement, pas tout le monde peut ou veut aller à l'université. Par exemple, pour ceux qui désirent entrer en médecine, il y a des examens d'entrée, des tests et des conditions à remplir avant de commencer ledit programme. Une université ne peut accueillir indéfiniment des étudiants, car ses espaces pour les cours sont limités.

Comment la CLASSE compte-t-elle instaurer un moratoire sur la construction de nouveaux bâtiments scolaires, si d'une part, elle prône l'universalité, et que de l'autre, elle ne veut pas agrandir les espaces disponibles à son éducation universelle? Le non-sens de cette association frise le ridicule. Le seul moyen pour que l'agrandissement des espaces d'enseignement ne soit pas nécessaire, serait de limiter l'entrée aux études universitaires. Comment la CLASSE peut-elle prôner la gratuité, et ignorer les frais liés aux infrastructures nécessaires à assurer leur utopie sociale? La seule solution serait de limiter l'entrée par des critères de sélection plus stricts, par exemple, la qualité du dossier scolaire, le contingentement de tous les programmes en fonction des besoins de la société et une assurance que l'étudiant aura un dossier étudiant impeccable. Toutes ces mesures nous mèneraient à une chose : l'éducation gratuite et universelle *seulement* à l'élite intellectuelle du Québec. Seule la crème de la crème devrait pouvoir s'offrir la gratuité scolaire, car après tout, les ressources sont limitées. La

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On en vient donc à une impasse : soit l'on contribue un peu plus, pour permettre une redistribution du tiers de la hausse aux étudiants les moins fortunés, soit l'on se dirige vers une société élitiste où seuls les étudiants les plus doués auront la chance d'obtenir un diplôme universitaire. Je préfère une bonification des prêts et bourses, un contingentement naturel de certains programmes, une plus grande responsabilité de la part des étudiants dans le paiement de leurs études et j'oublie l'idée de la gratuité scolaire. Après tout, on n'a jamais rien pour rien—quelqu'un doit payer la facture et les contribuables québécois sont déjà les plus imposés en Amérique du Nord. Laissons-les profiter du fruit de leur travail.

La grève

Depuis le début du débat des frais de scolarité, de nombreux étudiants manifestent dans les rues contre la décision de Line Beauchamp, autrefois ministre de l'Éducation, d'augmenter les frais de scolarité de 325 $ par année entre 2012 et 2017. Les étudiants opposés à la hausse affichent fièrement le carré rouge en signe de protestation. Les étudiants pour la hausse et contre la grève se sont dotés d'un carré vert, signe que l'éducation doit aller de l'avant. Bien que ceux-ci croient légitime de manifester dans les rues, certains remettent en question la bonne volonté des associations étudiantes.

Lors de la grève étudiante, la population québécoise a assisté à des manifestations massives se terminant souvent dans la violence. Lors des protestations, de nombreux manifestants ont bloqué l'accès au lieu de travail à bon nombre de travailleurs, ils ont bloqué des ponts qui relient l'île de Montréal à ses environs en pleine heure de pointe. Ils ont également bloqué l'accès à une garderie ne laissant pas passer les parents qui voulaient aller chercher leurs enfants. Ils ont également brûlé un pantin grandeur nature devant une garderie. Lors de la manifestation de Pâques, l'une des croix rouges géantes est tombée sur une passante et l'a blessée. Il y a eu des alertes à la bombe à Alma, des briques sur les rails de métro à Montréal, un groupe Facebook prônant la pendaison de Jean-François Morasse (étudiant

poursuivant en justice Gabriel Nadeau-Dubois, le co-porte-parole de la CLASSE), des actes de vandalisme à l'Université de Montréal, entre autres.

Ceux qui étaient en faveur de la hausse et qui s'opposaient à la grève étaient ciblés par les manifestants. Cédric Legros, étudiant de Sherbrooke, a fièrement protesté à Sherbrooke au milieu d'une manifestation rouge. Il était habillé en vert des pieds à la tête. La police a dû le faire sortir de la manifestation pour le protéger. L'Institut Économique de Montréal, qui préconise la hausse des frais de scolarité et une bonification des prêts et bourses, s'est fait saccager en plein jour par une quarantaine d'étudiants. Jacques Villeneuve, pilote automobile québécois et champion de Formule 1, a même reçu des menaces de mort suivant sa déclaration contre les manifestations étudiantes qui avaient lieu lors du Grand Prix de Montréal.

La revanche des carrés verts

En plus de la violence qui régnait, la grève avait un impact important sur les étudiants. Les manifestants et leurs piquets de grève empêchaient l'accès à leurs cours aux étudiants qui étaient contre la grève et qui voulaient assister aux cours. La perte de la session d'hiver 2012 en a été le résultat fâcheux. Quelques étudiants ont obtenu des injonctions qui, d'une part, ont permis aux étudiants d'avoir accès à leurs cours, mais d'autre part, ont exacerbé un conflit entre les étudiants. Conflit qui s'est traduit par un refus d'obéir à une décision injuste qui brimait les libertés individuelles.

Selon l'article 6 de la Charte des droits et libertés de la personne du Québec, toute personne a droit à la jouissance paisible et à la libre disposition de ses biens, sauf dans la mesure prévue par la loi. Selon l'article 49, une atteinte illicite à un droit ou à une liberté reconnue par la présente Charte confère à la victime le droit d'obtenir la cessation de cette atteinte et la réparation du préjudice moral ou matériel qui en résulte. C'est bien dans cet esprit que de nombreux étudiants ont poursuivi en justice leur établissement d'enseignement afin d'avoir accès à leurs cours.

Le 30 août 2012, des étudiants déposaient une demande de recours collectif contre 25 établissements d'enseignement et contre le procureur général du Québec. Kim Laganière et Mihai Adrian Draghici, étudiants au Collège de Montmorency et à l'Université Laval, respectivement, ont retenu les services de Michel Savonitto pour représenter les étudiants ayant subi des dommages à la suite du défaut par les établissements d'enseignement et par l'État d'avoir dispensé les cours. Le recours proposé reproche aux défendeurs d'avoir agi avec négligence, insouciance et incurie en ne prenant pas les mesures nécessaires pour que les cours de la session d'hiver 2012 soient donnés. Laurent Proulx, premier étudiant québécois à avoir obtenu une injonction, et Marc-Olivier Fortin, tous deux représentants de la Fondation 1625 (un organisme sans but lucratif créé en vue de recueillir des fonds pour soutenir les étudiants qui ont été victimes de la grève étudiante à la session d'hiver 2012), ont soutenu le recours collectif.

Il s'agit maintenant de savoir si c'est le concept de la responsabilisation ou celui de l'universalité qui dirigera les décisions dans l'éducation postsecondaire québécoise. Au final, c'est celui qui paiera toujours qui n'a aucun contrôle: le contribuable criblé de dettes. AM

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THE HIGH COST of Low Tuition in Quebec

Jacob T. Levy

The striking students in Quebec succeeded in blocking proposed tuition fee increases. But as Jacob T. Levy argues, this victory came at the cost of coercing fellow students and compromising the future of higher education in the province.

Les étudiants en grève au Québec sont parvenus à bloquer les hausses des frais de scolarité proposées. Cependant, tel que le soutient Jacob T. Levy, cette victoire a été acquise au prix de la coercition de leurs pairs et de la mise en cause des études supérieures de la province.

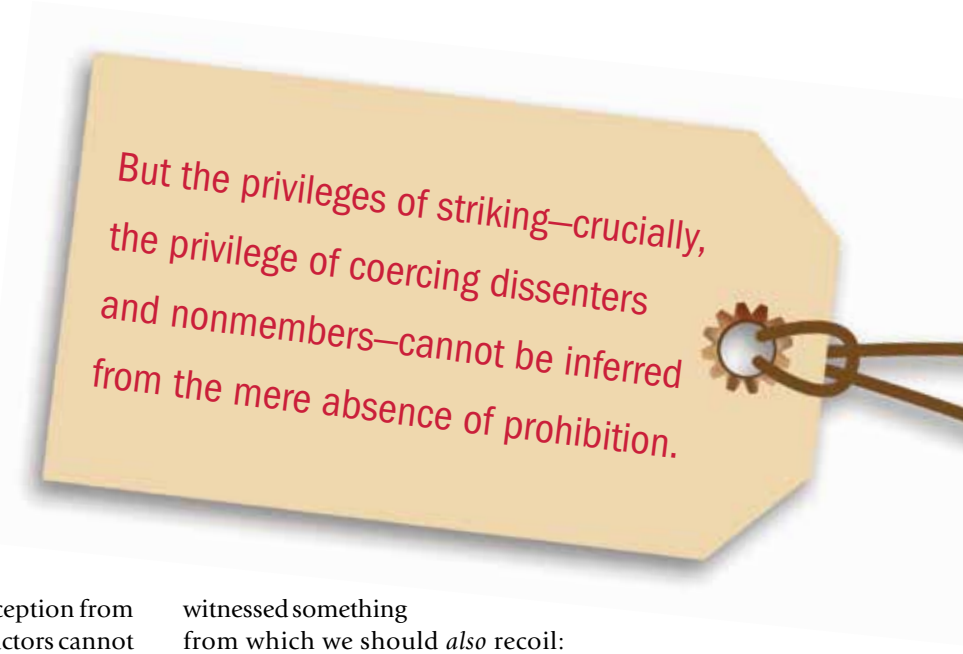
At this writing, the student unions' boycott of classes in Quebec has ended in success. The boycott precipitated an early election that brought down Jean Charest's PLQ government. His defense of higher tuition and his stand against the student unions—excessive and illiberal though it became—almost certainly helped him in the polls; the boycott was never popular among voters. Perhaps it even saved his party from the third-place finish and subsequent death spiral that seemed likely at one stage. Nonetheless, it prompted the early election, and thus the Parti Québecois' rise to power as much as a year earlier than would otherwise have occurred. The PQ has cancelled the planned tuition increases, and classes have resumed.

No educator can be unhappy that the events of the last six months have drawn to a close, however temporary. A semester was nearly lost; students in the street were subjected to police violence, students attempting to attend class were subjected to coercion from other students, and the attempt to prevent the latter brought armed police onto campuses. But one can be happy that it is over and still be discontent with the outcome. And so I am. The student

boycott was a destructive tactic put in the service of a goal that will do continuing harm to Quebec higher education.

First, the tactic.

In Canada, as in most liberal democracies, labour unions have the legal authority to call strikes. In Quebec, they have the special privilege of preventing dissenters or non-union members from filling the vacant jobs (**Editor's Note:** Ontario does not have anti-scab legislation). This privilege helps make collective bargaining possible and meaningful. This, it is generally thought, justifies the exception from the normal rule in a liberal society that private actors cannot coerce dissenters or non-members, and cannot interfere in exchanges and agreements between other parties. But the privilege is granted carefully and jealously, with legal regulation of the decision-making procedures that lead to a strike, as well as of the picketing and protesting activity that can accompany it. Quebec student unions, although creations of the provincial government with legal privileges of their own—crucially, the ability to set and require payment of dues from students enrolled at the universities and CEGEPs—do *not* have the legal privilege of calling strikes. Students as free persons have the right to assemble and protest, and to do so *en masse*. But the unions have no recognized privilege to call strikes—clearly deliberately so, since the legislation governing their activities is identical in many other respects to the legislation governing labour unions. Advocates of the boycotts responded to this by pointing out that strikes are also not *prohibited*, and that in a free society the presumption is on the side of permissibility, not prohibition. This is all true. But the privileges of striking—crucially, the privilege of coercing dissenters and nonmembers—cannot be inferred from the mere absence of prohibition.



The boycotters helped themselves to the privileges accorded to labour unions and claimed the right to be able to create a "strike" binding on dissenting students (not to mention instructors) while upholding none of the responsibilities of labour unions: publicly authorized quorum rules and voting procedures agreed upon in advance, limitations on the time and place of picketing, and so on. This was the source of the ugliest confrontations on campuses. Many universities and CEGEPs sought to remain open for students who wished to attend class, and ultimately called on police to enforce court injunctions against their classrooms being blocked by protesters. I think that most of us associated with universities recoiled from the image of riot police on campus. But where such police activity was not present—notably at the Université de Québec à Montréal—we witnessed something from which we should *also* recoil: professors who wanted to teach and students who wanted to learn being prevented from doing so by aggressive masked protesters who blocked classrooms or disrupted classes, loudly storming into classes in progress, turning off the lights or creating noise that made the classes impossible to continue. This left the universities and colleges affected by the boycott with no tolerable choices; they were cornered by the boycotters' claim that they could legitimately decide to shut classes down.

There was other scattered violence during the protests (more on the side of the police than on the side of the protesters, it must be said) as well as a handful of serious and dangerous acts of vandalism and disruption, most conspicuously, the smoke-bombing of the Montreal subway system. But vandalism, throwing rocks, and even terrorizing subway passengers were marginal activities. I don't think the same can be said of the attacks on classes, which were conceptually linked to the binding strike claim.

Most boycotters and protesters—"most" by far, since 150,000 students were on boycott and more than that took part in protests— took no part in such tactics. But, in order to forestall divide-and-conquer tactics on the government's part, the three student organizations tied their positions together early in the campaign. This prevented the two less-radical organizations (FEUQ and FECQ) from putting any meaningful distance between themselves and CLASSE, whether in protest tactics or in moving into negotiations. Effectively, the group that was most committed to taking coercive action against classes was allowed to set the position for the whole movement. Smoke-bombing was no one's endorsed strategy, but attacks on educational environments were explicitly endorsed.

I know that some of my colleagues share these sentiments about some of the boycotters' means, but believe that the ends were just, and that the preservation of ultra-low tuition stands as a real accomplishment. I cannot agree with

them. After tuition freezes lasting from 1968-1990 and 1994-2007, Quebec's universities are severely underfunded, while Quebec is already at or near the top in North America in both its tax and debt burden. In the meantime, both public and private universities throughout North America have regularly increased tuition above the general rate of consumer inflation; like health care, higher education is a labour-intensive industry that tends to become disproportionately more expensive as productivity increases elsewhere in the economy. I see no long-term alternatives besides tuition increases or a serious decline in the excellence of Quebec's universities. The fantasies peddled by some student groups that zero tuition could be easily attained with minor tax increases (above and beyond those the PQ already has planned) assume away the possibility of capital flight or tax-induced emigration.

A policy of keeping tuition far below the cost of an education can be understood in two different ways: as a transfer from those who do not attend university to those who do, or as a kind of collective loan to students from their future tax-paying selves. The first sounds regressive and unfair (especially when one thinks about ultra-low tuition for professional degrees such as law, business, medicine, and dentistry); the latter, progressive and fair. Both capture some truth and both are incomplete. The first perspective does not fully take into account that the tax system is progressive and that university graduates systematically out-earn those who do not attend. This means that the university graduates, while they received a benefit that others did not, are also likely to pay into the system at higher rates than others over their lifetimes. The second perspective misses the possibility of migration in and out of the system; students who take their cheap educations and leave will escape that repayment, while in-migrants or those who receive their educations elsewhere seemingly overpay.

Quebec of course does not face massive emigration, though it does face some. A large majority of Quebec's people are francophones who naturally want to remain in a francophone society. This helps keep the beneficiaries of the tuition subsidies paying into the system throughout their lifetimes. As things stand now, such emigration is probably concentrated among anglophones and allophones, and perhaps those most concerned about the preservation of "the French fact" don't mind seeing some of them leave for more lucrative pastures. (Although it should be noted that, in the last election, the Coalition pour l'Avenir du Québec (CAQ), noticed the problem of emigration among those who received cheap in-province medical degrees, and proposed exit taxes that would recoup the cost of their education after the fact; I suspect this is a harbinger of things to come as long as tuition remains very low.)

This is not the only connection between limited mobility and low tuition. The preservation of "the French fact" depends on the ability to keep young and professional francophones at home in Quebec. The moment of university enrollment might be a decisive one: if all of the smartest young francophones left for the rest of Canada or the US for their university degrees, too few might return to ensure Quebec's economic and demographic survival. The combination of a two-year CEGEP system followed by three-year undergraduate degrees with extremely low tuition for in-province students operates powerfully to keep them at home. The difference between a three-year degree at $2500 per year and a four-year degree at anything from twice to ten times that level at public universities elsewhere in North America (to say nothing of American private universities) is obvious.

This adds up to a certain kind of stabilizing social function being served by Quebec's ultra-low tuition. But it comes at a serious cost. To the degree that the system keeps students at home by sheer cheapness, it is not a priority to retain them through teaching and research excellence. Indeed, the social-reproduction function is at some *odds* with an emphasis on such excellence. Internationally competitive training would increase the risk that mobility will happen *after* graduation, as students take their subsidized degrees to Toronto, New York, or Paris.

But ultimately, the quality of education does matter, and if it is wrong to think of higher education as purely a private investment in marketable job skills, it is also wrong to think of it only as a means of training people to stay where they are in an insulated and isolated society. Quebec is no longer that kind of

society, and can only become less so over time. The need for a higher education system committed to excellence and able to compete nationally and internationally will only increase. This not only calls for funding increases of at least the level imagined by the defeated Liberal government; it is incompatible with the stable closed system of low tuition, low mobility, and high taxes over the long term.

All of this is in addition to the familiar point that was made during the spring and summer debates under the label "fair share." A society does benefit tremendously from a highly educated population, but a lot of that benefit is concentrated in the hands of those who themselves received the education. There is no easy way to parcel out the components, but a basic sense of that division lies behind the common policy of funding public universities partly out of the public purse and partly by tuition. Not only is Quebec an outlier in North America in how little it charges students now, the student movement demands that it become steadily more so, whether by a freeze at current nominal tuition levels or by a reduction toward zero.

Against all of these considerations is set the idea of accessibility. But the proposed tuition increases were well-structured toward maintaining accessibility, with a considerable share of funding earmarked for financial aid. Ultra-low tuition has no demonstrated tendency to increase university enrollments; defenders of low tuition point to high attendance at Quebec's free CEGEPs, but subsequent university attendance lags behind the rest of the country. On the surface, Quebec does not offer any resounding university access success commensurate with its extreme outlier status on tuition. Those concerned about university education of course must be concerned about access to it, but the conviction that low tuition is here superior to average tuition plus bursaries seems like nothing but ideological dogma. AM

Jacob T. Levy is the Tomlinson Professor of Political Theory, Associate Professor of Political Science and Associate Member of the Department of Philosophy at McGill University.

Equality of Opportunity, Equality of Means:

AN ARGUMENT FOR LOW TUITION AND THE STUDENT STRIKE

Daniel Weinstock

For months, debate raged in Quebec over the proposed tuition fee increase and the legitimacy of the student strike. But there are moral arguments to be made against tuition increases and for collective student action, says Daniel Weinstock.

Pendant des mois, un débat sur la hausse proposée des frais de scolarité et sur la légitimité de la grève étudiante a fait rage au Québec. Il reste toutefois à plaider les arguments moraux contre les hausses des frais de scolarité et pour l'action étudiante collective, a déclaré Daniel Weinstock.

Political philosophers have taken in recent years to distinguishing between "ideal theory" and "non-ideal theory." As I understand the distinction, the former has to do with the way we think that political institutions ought to be, were they to embody our preferred values perfectly. The latter pertains to the choices that we ought to make on specific issues of real-world political morality, given that our institutions are as they are—that is, far from ideal.

I opposed the university tuition hike by the (now defeated) Liberal government of Jean Charest for reasons of both ideal and non-ideal theory.

Beginning with the former, it has always seemed to me that accessible, and ideally free higher education is a worthwhile goal of liberal democratic political morality. We can either pay for higher education through tuition fees, or through progressive taxation, or through a combination of these sources. Now, as many proponents of the fee hike have observed, the share of costs paid for by taxation had the increase gone through would still have been more than 80%. Nonetheless, it would have represented a step away, rather than a step toward the ideal of a publicly funded university, and looking at examples from around the world (such as the UK), we must be wary of governments developing an appetite for increased tuition.

Why is taxation-funded rather than tuition-funded higher education a worthwhile goal for affluent societies such as our own to pursue? The answer has to do with what I take to be one of the central ethical commitments of liberal democracy, which is to aim for real equality of opportunity. Philosophers have argued endlessly about what that requirement entails, and about whether it is an adequate ideal for our societies. But at the most basic level, equality of opportunity has to do with ensuring to the greatest degree that we can through the tools of public policy that no citizen's fate is determined by the accidents of his birth. That is, in a liberal democracy there ought to be no *a priori* limits placed upon one's ability to dream big dreams or to have a fair shot at realizing them.

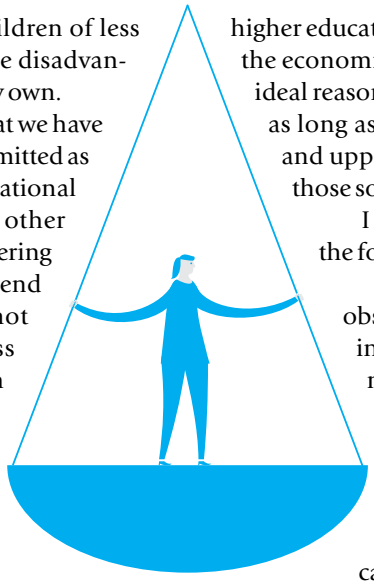
Now, there are many obstacles to achieving real equality of opportunity about which public policy can do very little. People are born into very different genetic, social and familial circumstances, and those circumstances will clearly have a harmful impact on the achievement of equal opportunity. Education is, however, a policy lever that we do have at

our disposal. We can enact policies that make education more or less accessible, and the extent to which we choose to open doors rather than close them will determine whether education ends up being a counterweight to the myriad other forces that tend to worsen inequality.

Clearly, ensuring that access to universities is determined by talent and by willingness to work hard, rather than by financial means and family connections, will have a huge impact on whether we achieve something resembling real equality of opportunity or not. I for one would rather pay more taxes in order to ensure that all young Quebeckers have a chance to pursue a university education if they desire to do so, and if they have the talent and work ethic to excel, rather than paying what would probably be roughly the same amount of money to send my own kids to university in a system that charged high tuition. My children would not be disadvantaged by a system in which well-paid professionals like myself contribute to a common pool of resources from which all can draw. The children of less privileged people, however, will certainly be disadvantaged by a system in which I just look after my own.

The children of less privileged people, however, will certainly be disadvantaged by a system in which I just look after my own.

Some commentators on the debates that we have been having in Quebec—who are just as committed as I am to the goal of achieving equality of educational opportunity—have argued that, given the other forces that are in place in Quebec society, lowering or eliminating up-front tuition fees would end up being a regressive move. They argue, not implausibly, that upper and middle-class people are more likely than are people from lower reaches of the socio-economic ladder to attend university. If university is free, that means that everyone's taxes pay for it, including those of working people who are less likely to attend university, or to send their children to higher education.



That is indeed a risk, and it is a risk that might very well come to pass if we do not attack other obstacles to accessibility. In particular, Quebec has what is arguably the most regressively funded elementary and secondary school system in Canada. Private schools are funded here to the tune of 60% of total operating costs, which is just enough to make them attractive to the middle class, but not enough to make them truly accessible to the disadvantaged. The result is that the middle class massively defects from the public school system (20% of Quebec children attend private schools here, compared to about 6% in Ontario). The downstream effects of this disastrous funding model on university access are dramatic. By the time our young people finish high school, the combination of differential resources between the two systems and cohort effects (children are more likely to consider attending university if they are surrounded by other children who are also university bound) mean that decisions about whether or not to pursue higher education have already been made by circumstance.

Were we not to address these other sources of educational inequity, then it is possible that low tuition would in fact end up constituting a tax paid by the poor to the rich. But the conclusion that ought to be drawn from this is that we ought to tackle *all* of the obstacles to equal opportunity that are amenable to policy tools appropriate to a liberal democracy. These include both "downstream" obstacles to do with rising tuition (and other costs associated with attending university, which tend to get left out of the equation in these debates), and "upstream" obstacles relating to tuition.

Now, in introducing these remarks I wrote that there were both ideal and non-ideal reasons to oppose tuition hikes. Quebec's massively unjust school system, which tends to inhibit demand for higher education on the part of people at the lower end of the economic ladder, might be taken to be a huge, non-ideal reason to raise tuition. Indeed, it might be argued, as long as university attendance is mostly a middle- and upper-class phenomenon, at least people from those social strata ought to pay their "fair share."

I think we ought to resist this conclusion, for the following reasons.

First, attending (as we should) to real-world obstacles to equality of opportunity should not induce quietism. But second, there are other non-ideal factors which in my view also argue for keeping tuition low, or at the very least for deferring increases for the time being.

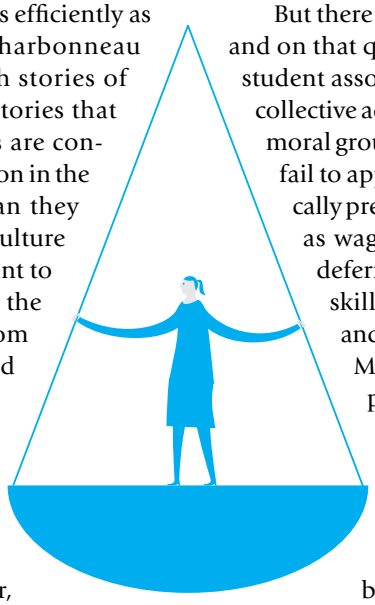
To begin with, it will not have escaped attention that the highest proportion of students in the strike movement came from the humanities and social sciences. These are precisely the sectors of Canadian universities that have been hardest hit by the reorganization of internal university financing in recent years. Departments are increasingly being expected to fend for themselves, to come up with "business plans" for new academic appointments, and so on. The days when "have" and "have-not" academic units were seen by university administrators as part of one big academic enterprise where different contributions were all appreciated without having to answer to a single model of "utility" are sadly gone, if they ever existed.

This means that the academic experience that students in the humanities and social sciences receive is not what it used to be. Resources are stretched to the breaking point and beyond, and this has an impact on the kind of education we are able to deliver to our students.

When students in these disciplines are told that they are going to have to pay more for their education, it is natural to expect that this request will come with a clear and transparent "business plan" indicating quite clearly how their money will translate into an improved learning environment. Such a plan has not been forthcoming, and in the absence of clear assurances that tuition increases will not simply contribute to a situation in which the rich departments get richer, it is difficult to blame the students in these disciplines for (at the very least) asking that the increase be put on the back burner until some assurances are obtained.

There are other, non-ideal considerations that pushed me toward adopting the anti-increase position. They have to do with the general sense that has been permeating Quebec society in recent years to the effect that, to put it mildly, the funds that are garnered by various levels of government through taxes are not being used as efficiently as they might. At the time of writing, the Charbonneau Commission is regaling Quebeckers with stories of corruption in the construction industry, stories that have a clear cash value as far as taxpayers are concerned. Indeed, public works and construction in the public sector costs the taxpayer more than they should because of an apparently endemic culture of bribes and kickbacks. It is entirely relevant to the present discussion that construction in the university sector has not been immune from allegations of incompetent management and of financial malfeasance.

There is also a growing sense that the very great riches that Quebeckers are fortunate enough to be sitting on, in the form of natural resources, are not being used for the greater good of the greatest number (as is the case in Norway). Rather, they are being exploited for short-term profit by extraction companies that are receiving sweetheart deals from the government.



In such circumstances, it is morally problematic to ask students to do their "fair share" by accepting an 82% increase in tuition over the next few years. Indeed, the question can at least be asked whether such an increase would even be needed were public finances and natural resources shepherded more prudently by our government. At the very least, the government should demonstrate that it is doing the most that it can with the money it collects from taxpayers, and with the riches that are our collective endowment, before it suggests a tuition fee increase.

So I opposed the increase because I believe, in general, that doing as much as we can to democratize access to higher education is a condition for the achievement of a society marked by real equality of opportunity. I also opposed the increase because, in the present circumstances, the use of money both inside the university sector and in the broader society makes the appeal to students to pay more morally problematic.

Opposing the increase in fees does not in and of itself imply supporting the strike. After all, according to some commentators, the right to strike does not apply to students, who can at best be seen as taking part in a boycott. A strike is a collective action taken on the basis of a recognized collective decision-making body that binds all members of the collective, including those who voted not to strike. A boycott is a convergence of individual actions that does not bind those who did not choose to boycott.

Do students have the right to strike, as opposed to simply engaging in a boycott? That question can be viewed as a purely legal one. And there is controversy among Quebec jurists as to whether the laws that protect the right to strike of workers also apply to students.

But there is also a question of political morality here, and on that question I have reached the conclusion that student associations should have the right to engage in collective actions such as strikes. It is hard to see why the moral grounds that justify the right to strike of workers fail to apply to students. Students are in an economically precarious situation, not by virtue of their status as wage labourers, but as individuals who have deferred gainful employment in order to acquire skills that are necessary for a modern economy and for the general cultural well-being of society. Modern universities and governments are at pains to remind us that universities have among their primary function the training of a modern workforce that suits the needs of a new economy. Thus, just like workers, students place themselves in an economically precarious and vulnerable position, but perform a function that is central to economic success. Just like workers, the only way in which they can offset that vulnerability is by acting together.

Students not only perform functions that correspond to the needs of the marketplace. Through the research in which they engage, they are also cultural workers who contribute greatly to the ethical and cultural backbone of society. They do so very often in conditions of material hardship. Many of them do so without any real prospect that the important academic work they perform—to ensure that our cultural and intellectual heritage will continue to resonate through the ages—will lead to their securing gainful employment.

Thus, in ways that are sufficiently analogous to workers, students perform socially and economically important tasks in conditions of insecurity and vulnerability. In these conditions, it does not seem incongruous to argue that if a right to strike exists, then students should be able to claim it. AM

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Not another brick in the wall: Capitalism and student protests in Chile

Andrés Bernasconi

Andrés Bernasconi and the high school students of San Alberto Hurtado School in Santiago, Chile reflect upon the impetus, successes and eventual undoing of the 2011 student protests in Chile.

Andrés Bernasconi et les élèves de l'école secondaire San Alberto Hurtado School, à Santiago, Chili, se penchent sur l'élan, les succès et l'échec éventuel des manifestations étudiantes de 2011 au Chili.

A few days ago, I visited a high school in a poor urban area in Western Santiago and met with the junior and senior classes to discuss the student movement of 2011 in Chile. "What were the mobilized youth demanding?" I asked the students in the San Alberto Hurtado School. "Did they succeed?" The questions were relevant enough to keep the students engaged. They voiced their opinions and argued for a while, beating the somnolence induced by the heat and the preceding lunch. As I left, my thoughts went to Pink Floyd: these kids, many of whom had joined the protest the previous year, did not want to become just another brick in the edifice of a market economy. They wouldn't have any trouble joining the labour market upon graduation—this was a trade school, after all, where kids were trained in culinary arts and in telecommunications—or after college, for those who would continue into higher education. But they were no longer content to be just a manual or intellectual labourer in the machinery of a capitalist economy.

Why were high school and higher education students protesting in the streets for so long and in such great numbers? After all, the street rallies often involved

100,000 people, week after week, and the strikes went on for so long that thousands of high school students failed to advance and had to repeat grades, and universities had to extend the term well into the summer to prevent their students from losing a whole semester. What could possibly have caused such an indignant reaction?

The juniors and seniors of the San Alberto Hurtado School said the students had demanded an educational system of quality for all, not just the affluent, and wanted higher education to be free of tuition fees. They said that the students didn't like the municipal control of public schools installed during the years of the Pinochet regime, and proposed instead to restore the role of the central government (the national Ministry of Education) in the governance and administration of public schools. The kids also brought up the issue of "democratization," or the demand for student participation in school governance, especially critical at the higher education level. They also demanded that public universities had to be appropriately funded so that they could carry out their social mission. But was all this enough to fuel a social movement of such scale?

When it was my turn to weigh in, attempting an explanation of the forces propelling the demonstrations, I reminded the assembly that behind these complaints were two glaring wounds in the Chilean social compact: extreme inequality across social strata, and an educational system that couldn't be counted upon to provide opportunities for a better life to those disadvantaged by inequality. While economists are in disagreement about the degree of intergenerational social mobility in Chile, the feeling of the people, especially among the youth marching in the streets last year, is that inequality in Chile is not only great, but has been persistent over time, and that our poor-quality, unregulated, underfunded, market-driven educational system is to blame.

Another very important battle cry of the movement evoked during my session at San Alberto Hurtado School was, "No more profit!" In Chile, private K-12 schools, as well as non-university tertiary institutions, can organize themselves as business corporations. In the case of universities, although the law requires that they be non-profit charities, most, in fact, shirk the law and generate economic surpluses that find their way to the founders of the university and their successors through shell companies. Protesters strongly denounced such arrangements—both the legal and the illegal profiteering—as profoundly misguided, and were clear in their belief that "education can never be a business."

In the media, representatives of the striking university students had also articulated their concerns about the subjugation of education to the demands of the economy. The need for universities to seek most of their funding through tuition fees as well as consulting, training, research and development services provided to paying customers was decried as a distortion of the mission of the university, from serving the good of the whole to serving the requirements of those who could pay. The design of curricula based on the demands of labour markets and the transformation of education into job training were similarly offered as examples of what was wrong with higher education in Chile.

While not apparent among the kids I was visiting this time, analysts pointed out that the protests signaled a malaise that extended across the nation and went beyond education to a deep frustration with the characteristics our society has adopted since the neoliberal reforms of the early 1980s. The outcomes are clear: individualistic pursuit of wealth; trust displaced by contracts; blatant materialism and consumerism (even among those who can hardly afford it, leading to stifling debt); spatial segregation of the poor into ghetto-like districts in all major cities while the rich and the upper-middle-class enclose themselves in gated communities; privatized education, pensions, health care. All of this points to an every-man-for-himself society where solidarity, the quest for the common good, and shared responsibility for the well-being of everyone are completely absent.

This discontent explains the protests' singular strength of numbers; the determination of purpose among the students in the face of police repression and the looming prospect of losing the academic year; ample social support of the cause across age groups and social conditions; and wide scope of the demands of the student movement (extending to items such as a constitutional convention and the nationalization of mining resources).

This dimension of the phenomenon was, by the way, what turned the student movement into international news. Chile, its educational woes, and the marching students would not have been of interest were it not for the fact that Chile is the marquee country for successful neoliberal reforms, a full member of the OECD touted by the World Bank and other development agencies as an exemplar of a well-managed economy and sound social policy. It is also a stable democracy with one of the most reliable rule of law environments in the region. For all whose political hearts are located to the left of the current political economy orthodoxy, a stumble in Chile's seemingly unstoppable

Last year's protests over education highlighted its importance and at the same time turned it into an urgent problem.

trajectory to development by way of neoliberalism is exciting news. In the context of similar mass expressions of rejection of the tenets and outcomes of this orthodoxy, like the *indignados* in Madrid, or Occupy Wall Street in New York, Chileans could be seen as joining in a world-wide denunciation of global capitalism.

But the expansion of the movement to embrace the different manifestations of this diffuse discontent became its undoing. As the movement gained social support and became a political and communications juggernaut various items in the left's wish list—at best, only marginally related to education—were added to the agenda. This ultimately eroded the legitimacy of the overall movement to the detriment of its education-related goals. As the movement became a catalyst for all grievances, from education to the environment, the gain in size came at the expense of a loss in focus and in the ability to present a coherent message to society and an actionable set of demands to the government.

The blurring of the education-focused purpose of the movement, joined with other factors to undermine the movement. A collective mode of decision-making bogged down leadership with intractable and opaque internal disputes and made it look radical and unreasonable. The government adopted a clever delaying strategy, betting on natural attrition and the dissolving effect of the end of the academic year, and the change of leadership of most student unions at year's end(which displaced Camila Vallejo, the enormously charismatic president of the student federation at the University of Chile) to erode momentum. And they were right; all of these factors conspired to wind down the movement and bring it to an end, although scattered, weaker manifestations of it have emerged during 2012 as well.

Now, back to the assembly room in the San Alberto Hurtado School. I had asked them what their opinion was with respect to the degree of success of the student movement. Did it achieve anything? Was it worth the tremendous effort? The students in the assembly room were divided. Some pointed to the increase in student aid, and the easing of the financial conditions for repayment of college loans. I brought up the government's bill to create a higher education agency responsible for protection of students' rights and the enforcement of the non-profit status of private universities. There was also the initiative to revamp and strengthen accreditation as a means to quality assurance in schools and in higher education, and a new program by the government to invest in the improvement of schools of education in universities.

There was much beyond policy measures that was gained by the installation of education and its problems center stage in the political and policy agendas, in the agenda of the media, and in the consciousness of educators, school administrators, faculty, the teachers' union, and society at large. Typically, the health of an educational system is a matter of great importance to all, but of little urgency for most. Last year's protests over education highlighted its importance and at the same time turned it into an urgent problem.

Unlike the students in Roger Waters' song, Chilean students need an education. They need good quality universities and colleges, whether they were born amidst privilege or in abject poverty. Perhaps the single-most important outcome of last year's protests is that now they are aware of this need, they understand why this is a need, and they are prepared to demand it as a right. AM

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THE QUIET CAMPUS:
The Anatomy of Dissent at Canadian Universities

Ken Coates

Once, it seemed as though universities would champion social and political change. But as Ken Coates observes, a disturbing quiet has settled on our institutions.

Autrefois, on aurait pensé que les universités se seraient faites le champion du changement social et politique. Mais, comme le fait remarquer Ken Coates, un silence troublant s'est abattu sur nos établissements.

The remarkable—a word that can be read in many different ways—2012 student protests in Quebec have stirred memories of the activist campuses of yesteryear. For faculty members introduced to the academy in the era of student activism, anti-Vietnam War protests, and general social unrest, the recent quietude of the Canadian university system has been disturbing. Universities had been transformed in the 1960s from comfortable retreats into agents of intellectual foment, social change, and political action. For a time, it appeared that the imperatives of the academy had aligned with a commitment to social justice to create a system almost ideally set to lead Canada's transformation.

Universities had long stood apart intellectually from the Canadian mainstream, but finally, in the1960s, began to reflect society at large. The humanities and social sciences expanded rapidly. Women, minorities, immigrants and working class Canadians came to campuses in record numbers and, later, showed up at the front of the classroom. They brought new perspectives on the issues of the day, challenging the patriarchal, middle-class hegemony that had dominated Canadian universities for generations. With some exceptions, faculty members and administrators stood behind student radicals and protestors. Many faculty members used the classroom and their writing to support hitherto unpopular causes. Universities were often at the vanguard of protests against the Vietnam War and in favour of the rights of women, Aboriginals, LGBT individuals, and minorities.

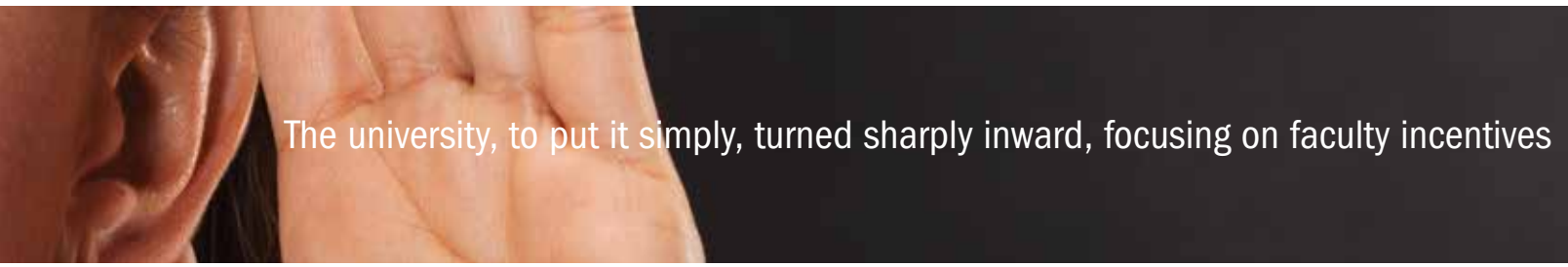
Academic freedom, although rarely tested in a formal sense, was a right that was taken for granted. Faculty members, graduate students and undergraduates routinely pressed at the boundaries of conventional debate, often taking their commitment to causes, principles and policy matters into the public realm. The public pressed back, complaining about Marxist teachers, feminist "propaganda," pro-Aboriginal courses, and overt advocacy for causes from environmentalism to homosexual rights. While the academy remained a fairly conservative place—the radicalism of the few did not permeate the entire professoriate or the student body—there was ample room to dissent, to protest and to challenge the status quo. While professors probably devoted too much effort to their university affairs and too little to

broader societal debates and issues, the reality was that universities were leading a social revolution, one that had profound implications for Canada and much of the world.

Then the promise of the 1960s and 1970s faded. The heady days of radical thought and public protest slowly declined, at least in part because of the aging of the professors hired in the period of university expansion. Universities found themselves in an interesting and complex situation, expected to respond to the educational needs of historically disadvantaged groups, encouraged to include more professional and career-focused programs, and challenged to provide the scientific and technological know-how needed to underpin the rapidly emerging "new economy." Meeting these expectations would have been enough of a challenge. But there was more. There were additional government pressures to increase research intensiveness and foster commercialization, a decline in public revenues, rapidly rising costs (not the least for salaries), and a national preoccupation with providing access for as many students as possible. Added to this were myriad regulatory and service requirements associated with freedom of information, disability services, and support for international students. On the positive side, new universities opened, colleges were converted to university colleges and then universities, on-line delivery expanded, more faculty members were hired (but not enough to keep up with enrollment growth), and research funding expanded dramatically. Ethnic diversity on campus also resulted in students taking more of a lead on the controversial topics of the day—witness the regular conflicts between pro-Israel and pro-Palestinian groups at central Canadian universities, advocacy by LGBT student organizations, and outspoken demands for more "green" institutions. Faculty members typically play only a peripheral role in these discussions.

There were other, less recognized changes. Disciplines became an even stronger focus for university professors, many of whom appeared less concerned about external audiences for their work than about the academic colleagues who vetted their papers and grant applications. With the quantification of research results for the purposes of tenure reviews, merit, research grants, and promotion, faculty members quickly learned to follow the incentives. At many universities, the prospect of merit or rapid promotion carried substantial financial and professional returns. With the incredible growth of universities around the world, and the proliferation of academic scholarship to the point where most professors struggled to keep up with work in their sub-discipline (or, typically, sub-sub-sub-discipline), the focus on publications, conference presentations, and research grants assumed a greater role within the university. Having an impact on society at large, while generally applauded, was not seen as truly meritorious within the academy and generally carried few financial rewards. The university, to put it simply, turned sharply inward, focusing on faculty incentives and discipline-based accomplishments rather than the concerns of society at large.

There has been much debate, led by the Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT), about the vulnerability of Canadian universities to external influences. The rise of private and corporate donations and the sharp increase in institutional reliance on industry partnerships and contract research skewed the university further away from cutting edge intellectual work and public engagement. CAUT has focused a great deal of energy on a handful of social science-based donations, challenging what they see as the possibility for interference with academic freedom in terms of faculty hiring and program development. CAUT has been largely silent on the much more widespread integration of faculty research and corporate activities in engineering, the sciences, medical fields, and business schools. Here, close collaboration has almost become the norm, and research and teaching agendas in these areas have long been shaped by contracts, partnerships, and the requirements of external accrediting agencies. If academic freedom is defined, in part, as the ability to pursue research determined entirely by personal interest, the sciences and applied sciences often operate under many more constraints than do social science and humanities professors. But in these fields, there is much greater acceptance among faculty members and institutions of proper and engaged cooperation with the private sector and government agencies.



Of course, university faculty members who work with companies, government agencies, external organizations, and who accept funding from private sources, are exercising their freedom as academics. Few, if any, faculty members have been forced to accept funding or other logistical support for their research and writing, and yet many do. University faculty members work with trade unions and environmental groups,

First Nations and immigrant communities, professional organizations, and corporations. They develop market-ready products that have turned some university faculty into millionaires, assist disadvantaged groups to gain public attention, and work on public policy instruments that shape government and society. In some instances they get paid (and often paid very well) for this work; in other instances, particularly with community and not-for-profit groups, their contributions are pro bono, with some pay-off in terms of peer-reviewed publications and merit pay. With so many applied researchers and teachers on campus—from engineering to accounting, from nursing to marketing—it only follows logically that the campus life would tip away from "pure" research to more practical, externally connected activity. The idea that universities are now (if they ever were) places where faculty members and their students explored the world of ideas unfettered by interference or influence from external agencies and organizations has been sharply diminished.

While it is wrong to idealize the "old days" into some form of intellectual paradise, the reality is that there used to be a greater connection with the world at large, less preoccupation with collecting the accolades of the international

sity education, but for those who manage to secure a tenure stream job at a Canadian institution the career and professional opportunities are first-rate. Some faculty members routinely adjust their research plans to secure funding, be it in the form of government research grants, foundation support, or private sector support, but rarely have to accept overt control over their work.

At the same time, universities have become less dynamic places. Careerism among students, graduate students, and faculty members has replaced genuine engagement with contemporary issues. Only a handful of public intellectuals hold forth on regional or national matters—where would the universities be in terms of public profile without the journalism-friendly faculty in Political Science?—and the vast majority are content to work at the ever-narrowing frontiers of knowledge and discovery. There are times when advocacy groups in the community carry their issues onto campus—again the Israel-Palestinian tensions are a good case in point—but genuine, open-ended debates about the most crucial issues of our time are few. There are more practical and logistical causes of these problems. Some faculty members come to campus only

and discipline-based accomplishments rather than the concerns of society at large.

academic profession, and (but only for a few decades) more willingness to speak truth to power, or at least to the powers out of favour with the academy. The old idea of the university as the moral conscience of society, while significantly true intellectually, has only episodically been true in practical terms. Indeed, universities have been training grounds for the status quo for much of their history, reinforcing the values of the dominant society, supporting the aspirations of the middle and upper middle class. Individual faculty members spoke out, in the past as in the present, but the campuses as a whole were quiet and comfortable places.

Two influences—the shift toward disciplinary priorities and growing engagement with external actors—now dominate the Canadian academy. While Canadian faculty members may chafe a little under the constraints of the current regime, there is an upside to all of this. Canadian universities have gained substantial federal and provincial financial support, and faculty enjoy the second-highest average salaries in the world and enviable working conditions on most campuses. The prestige of the profession appears to have taken a knock in recent years, due largely to the proliferation of campuses and the ubiquity of a univer-

sporadically and a high percentage of students are preoccupied with part-time jobs due to rising tuition fees. Sadly, most members of the public find the nuances of scholarly debate either obscure or irrelevant. The now common phrase—distressingly unchallenged by members of the academy—that something is "only academic" is one of the great put-downs of modern times. The exceptions—a visit from a brilliant guest lecturer, a tense debate about a highly politicized or controversial topic, the emergence of a new and high energy research group—serve as a reminder of what universities could—and should—be.

What is the effect of all of this? First, Canadian universities are not particularly exciting centres of critical thought, if they ever were. The research shows students come to university primarily in pursuit of a high-wage job. (Anticipating the criticism, suffice it to say that on the other hand, a minority of university students are idea-driven, idealistic and highly motivated to learn and change the world for the better. They are a joy to have on campus and in the classroom.) Governments want highly qualified personnel. Businesses want top-notch employees. Parents want their children launched into adulthood and their careers. Faculty

members, in the main, are focused on their research and professional engagements. There is not a great deal of room in this mélange of interests for exciting debates about social change, cultural revolutions, and transformative action.

For generations, universities have promoted the educational and intellectual benefits derived from a post-secondary education, as well they should. Confronting ideas, especially those that disturb and provoke, is a central part of the university experience for all students. From this, we have long believed, come young adults who understand their country and their world, who have learned about injustice and inhumanity, and who are well positioned to serve as the kind of engaged and informed citizens that every society needs and wants. Canadian universities still provide excellent opportunities for just such personal and collective development. Students who are engaged inside and outside the classrooms, professors who build bridges between scholarship and public debate, and institutions that do not shy away from controversial subjects contribute to a vital process of collective education and empowerment. Is it wrong to simply wish that we had much more of this on Canadian campuses?

Canadian campuses have become distressingly quiet. It is not that the universities are without dissenters from all points on political and social spectrums. Many of the country's most radical, creative, and outspoken commentators work or study at universities and use the campus as a pulpit. This is how it should be. But the preoccupation with practicalities—work, careers, salaries, and the commercialization of research—has transformed Canadian universities into calm, largely dissent-free places, with the greatest debates often saved for battles between faculty and students and the campus administrators. There are no structural or legal impediments to greater engagement. There is nothing stopping students and faculty from speaking out, no grand tribunals determined to impose punishments on those who challenge the status quo. We have self-regulated ourselves into near-silence, and our students and the country suffer from the quiet as much as university faculty. It is more than nostalgia that brings one to yearn for days of activism and protest; it is, instead, the realization that the ideas, talent, energy and resources of the academic could and should be used to change our country and our world for the better. AM

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Humour Matters

Steve Penfold

"Hello, Professor Penfold? It's the fiscal crisis calling."

BY THE TIME this column is published, I will have no telephone in my office. It turns out that phones are *really* expensive, and with so many alternatives—from iPads to Blackberries and email to social media—there was no sense holding on to anachronistic nineteenth century technologies.

So don't expect any heroic resistance from me. I'm not about to chain myself to my telephone, singing Woody Guthrie songs and quoting Martin Luther King while campus police try to talk me down. The fact is that these decisions always get made by reasonable people in real binds: fiscal crises may be socially constructed, but they produce real political and financial constraints nonetheless.

I mean, I have bigger things to worry about than telephones. Universities are under attack. Declining funding, academic reform, commercialization, contingent labour—these are the watchwords of higher education nowadays. Every week, the columns of the *Globe and Mail* are filled with testaments to our irrelevancy—something that didn't worry me until plagiarism-checking bloggers suggested that such articles might represent (quite literally) the opinions of a great many people. And don't get me started on the latest canon of academic non-debate—differentiation, where a few universities will be "research intensive" while the others will presumably spend their time organizing bake sales. If you remain unsure which institutions will get those plum research dollars, I invite you to call me to enquire.

So, in this political context, there are just so many good reasons to pull the plug on telephones. Mine hardly ever rings anymore, and when it does it's invariably someone asking me to do more work (like, say, the editor of *Academic Matters* reminding me that my column is three weeks late). Besides, since—contra those *Globe* columnists—we are all overworked, why not just welcome *any* development that promises to make us harder to reach? That's the kind of academic reform that I suspect we can all embrace. And since my first act of apathetic semi-resistance was to whine on Facebook (the existence of which is precisely why I don't need my phone), that's point, set, and match to the dial tone silencers.

To be fair and precise, they did tell us we could pay for an office phone from our professorial funds—the sort of bake-sale government that is longstanding at the public school level, where formerly core services are financed by, er, empowered local communities taking ownership of their own resources. My daughters seem to spend half their school days hawking burnt muffins to parents who pretend to be hungry, no doubt learning important entrepreneurial skills that will serve them well in the neoliberal millennium. "Work those long eyelashes, little girl, it'll sell more muffins and maybe land you a tenure-track job."

But right now, at a far-off differentiated university where they still teach undergraduates, some historian is telling students that perfectly reasonable short-term decisions can often lead to highly irrational long-term consequences. I mean, how else do you explain World War One, hula hoops, or an unelected Senate? Our forebears just needed to keep some big crowd busy for a few minutes, and look where we ended up.

And there's the rub. Telephones are certainly expensive and there are, of course, numerous alternatives. But *Globe* columnists will eventually make the same arguments about everything, from tutorials to toilets, what with podcasts, catheters, and that alley behind the cafeteria. I'm happy to abandon Mr. Bell's infernal machine, but someone tell me this - how do we stay focused on that long path to irrationality while we're so busy excusing these small semi-reasonable steps? Damned if I know, but if I see you out behind the cafeteria with your pants down, don't say I didn't warn you. AM

Steve Penfold is Academic Matters' *humour columnist. He moonlights as an Associate Professor of History at the University of Toronto.*

Editorial Matters

Graeme Stewart

THE GREAT MEDIEVAL universities—Paris, Bologna, Oxford—were places far removed from the tribulations of daily life. Under the protection of the Church, scholars were free to pursue knowledge for its own sake without interference from the city fathers. They lived in near-literal ivory towers, soaring above the concerns of kings and peasants alike.

This separation could not last. First in Scotland, then in France, and then with Humboldt's bold reforms to German universities, the academy began to attend to earthly affairs. But scholars continued to put distance between themselves and the world outside the university walls. In the Humboldtian institution—the template which many modern universities are based upon—being apolitical was seen as the price of academic freedom. The university could study society, provided it kept its distance.

But to paraphrase an old saying, if you stare too long at society, society begins to stare back. Higher education institutions have been pulled into the flow and sweep of history, and are now deeply connected to political, economic, and social affairs—whether they like it or not.

Universities have always cast a critical eye on society. But throughout the violent disruptions that buffeted the 20th century, universities this criticism was often joined by dissent and confrontation. From the anti-war movement in the United States to the tumult of Latin American campuses, the university was the site of violence, of repression, and of defiance. In short, they demonstrated their capacity for *anger.* It's an idea that would seem totally alien to the learned men of the 12th century, safely tucked into their cloisters.

This issue of *Academic Matters* examines the capacity for anger in the modern university, and by extension, the increasing entanglement of universities with wider social conflict. We've dedicated much of this issue to one of the most startling recent example of academic unrest —the student protests in Quebec over proposed tuition fee increases. For months, Montreal was gripped by the student strike, which often saw tens of thousands of students expressing their anger in the streets. The protests polarized public opinion, and oceans of ink were spilled by those either praising or excoriating students for their anger.

Now that the protests have ended, *Academic Matters* asked those who experienced it firsthand to provide some perspective. Martin Robert explains the rationale of the protests as defined by CLASSE, the most active and powerful of the striking student associations. As a counterpoint, Arielle Grenier founder of the 'green square' group that opposed the student strike—provides stark criticism of both the logic of the strike and the behavior of the striking students.

On the faculty side, Jacob T. Levy questions the tactics of the protestors, and suggests that their anger became an excuse to deny the rights of others. For his part, Daniel Weinstock examines the morality of the strike, a finds the rationale and the tactics justifiable. We leave it to the reader to decide who made the more persuasive case.

But academic anger is not confined to Quebec. Indeed, Latin America has a long history of student protest and intensely politicized universities. Andrés Bernasconi examines the 2011 Chilean student unrest—with the help of high school students—and asks what the protestors wanted and what they gained during their massive demonstrations in Santiago.

Finally, Ken Coates provides a eulogy for a brief moment in Canadian higher education when anger, dedication to social justice, and an unusual openness combined to make universities true places of change. He charts the reasons for the decline of university engagement with the wider world, and wonders why an eerie quiet has settled across our institutions. In a time of anger, when calls for change and action are heard from every corner, does the quiet university render itself irrelevant?

The days of the medieval university, separate and aloof from the cares and emotions of daily life, are well behind us. But as we look from Quebec, to Chile, to institutions across Canada, it is an open question whether we are trying to claw our way back into the past, or engage with the future.

When it comes to the magazine before you, there are no ivory towers here. We view each issue of *Academic Matters* as the starting point of a conversation, and we hope you'll engage with the ideas and opinions presented in these pages. Tell us what you think—send us an email, or leave a comment on our website, www.AcademicMatters.ca (where you can also read the English translation of Arielle Grenier's article). You can also connect with us on Twitter and Facebook for news on web exclusive-articles, new blog posts, and other news from the magazine.

Thanks for reading. AM

Graeme Stewart is the Editor-in-Chief of Academic Matters, *Communications Manager for the Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations, and a PhD student at the University of Toronto.*

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