

Wake up and stop poor funding, students say

by Vicki Pasternak and Pat Micelli

TORONTO — "Education is a right, not a privilege," angry students from across Ontario cried at Queen's Park last Wednesday — about a month before 1993 tuition rates are announced.

About 200 Ontario college and university students, including a crowd from York, marched from Ryerson Polytechnical Institute's downtown Toronto campus to the government buildings as part of annual National Student Day festivities.

Student representatives said they anticipate skyrocketing tuition hikes in the coming year, and cuts to provincial student grants.

Students in the crowd stressed the importance of affordable university education to prepare the next generation of Canadians for the future. They also expressed their dissatisfaction with the federal and provincial governments' lack of support for post-secondary education.

"(Ontario premier) Bob Rae has been promising to stand up for education rights but tuition (fees in Ontario have) increased 13 per cent in the last two years," said Simon Edwards, a Ryerson journalism student.

"It's time to wake up and realize that the man preaching isn't really behind you."

Jeff Orchard, an Ontario Federation of Students representative, said he's heard rumors of the Ontario gov-

ernment increasing tuition fees by as much as 30 per cent and eliminating Ontario Student Assistance Program grants.

York student government president Nikki Gershain said this year's hike will probably be much higher than last year's — "perhaps twice as much" — but was not convinced it would be as high as 30 per cent.

"On some level, I'm not allowing myself to believe the Rae government will do that to students. But based on the government's record, I shouldn't be surprised. Maybe I'm still holding on to some sort of naive vision of the NDP government."

Universities Minister Richard Allen, did not offer any assurances. According to last week's *Toronto Star*, Allen did not confirm the rumors but he told reporters tuition fees are not going down.

Students have protested annually since National Student Day was instituted 15 years ago.

"We've had a rally every year," said Orchard. "We've always had something to be pissed-off about."

Gershain said she was disappointed in York's turnout, adding that the university senate's decision not to cancel classes for the day had a negative effect.

"I had at least a dozen students, if not more, say 'I can't miss my class,' and it's understandable, especially when you're spending so much money on your education."

Federation vice president Michèle



The few, the proud, the bony. Ontario's students March on Queen's Park yet again to chew out Premier Bob Rae. • photo by Dan Nedelko

Chai, who helped organize the event, said the yearly protest could be more effective and powerful if more students attended, but added that she thought a majority of students there were from York.

Gershain said there are a lot of

additional factors that prevent students from attending the annual protest.

"The deterioration of quality and accessibility in education is something that takes place very slowly. It becomes an accepted reality for those

who don't know anything else."

Students have less time, because many have to work in addition to their studies, and are working a lot harder to maintain their grades as professors try to weed students out to lessen the overcrowding, she added.

york briefs

Union tries to improve latest offer

by John Montesano

You won't see picket lines at campus entrances after all if a new agreement between the administration and union officials is supported by teaching assistants.

Canadian Union of Educational Workers officials, who represent teaching assistants and part-time professors, hashed out an agreement last Wednesday after a Oct. 16 vote failed to get at least 60 per cent of members to approve a strike.

The vote was 57 per cent in support, not enough for the executive to call a strike.

The union returned to the bargaining table to get a better deal, said Margaret Watson, the union's chief negotiator.

"We feel we got what we wanted," she said, adding she now expects members to support the agreement.

Talks hit a snag when the union wanted guarantees graduate tuition in the "post-residency" period would not increase. Currently doctoral and masters students pay less tuition after their first year of study because they use York's recourses less. But other Ontario universities have started charging full rates, and many believe York will follow suit.

As part of the new collective bargaining agreement, the administration has guaranteed these post-resident tuition discounts will not be reduced or eliminated in the next academic year.

The administration also agreed to provide any information to the union about discussions regarding changes to the graduate fee structure.

"We've established the principle of rebating the increase in graduate tuition, she said. "In May 1, 1992 grad fees went up 11 per cent but we got a complete rebate, that's effectively a freeze on fees for our members."

Administration chief negotiator Paula O'Reilly could not be reached for comment.

Union members will be voting on the agreement in two weeks. Majority support will ratify the deal.

"Brutal" odor clears Founders students

by Mike Adler

A bad smell forced students out of Founders residence almost two weeks ago.

"There was an odor of some sort and it was pretty brutal — whatever it was," said residence tutor Peter Fraser.

Fraser said he told a residence don to pull a fire alarm and evacuate the building on Oct. 16 because some students found it difficult to breathe.

North York's fire department searched the residence. Housing director Peter Ridout said a broken fan motor in the heating system was blamed.

"It's friction that causes the smell. It doesn't happen very often," Ridout explained last week.

Fraser said a few students got oxygen from ambulance attendants but none were taken to hospital.

New video explores campus safety

by Andrea Condon

A frighteningly realistic video called "Safer for Women...Safer for Everyone" has arrived at York.

The video, which was released by the Council of Ontario Universities' Committee on the Status of Women, is meant to train women to perform safety evaluations on campus.

According to Pam

MacDonald, head of security and parking, York has already been conducting similar safety audits for a number of years on buildings such as Osgoode Hall, Fine Arts and Behavioral Science.

However, MacDonald said the video "has potential in a number of areas."

The video could possibly be used as part of a general safety education program which would also present sta-

tistics on crime at York, as well as information about what the university is doing to improve safety.

There are concerns that the video would be too alarming for some viewers, especially first year students. Staff and student security so far are the video's only audience.

"I wish the message could be gotten across in a less frightening way," one respondent said.

"We have to be realistic about safety," said a staff member at York's sexual harassment centre who did not wish to be named.

According to the staffer, another drawback of the video could be that, it "focuses more on [attacks by] strangers."

In reality, most attacks are committed by someone the victim knows, she said.

"In terms of personal safety, the biggest risk is who you associate with," MacDonald said.

Still, MacDonald believes the video is worth seeing.

If incorporated into a safety program, the video would become part of security's ongoing push for a safer campus, she suggests.

Some other safety projects which have been undertaken are improving lighting outdoors, installing more emergency telephones, and putting cellular phones in isolated areas.

Despite these efforts, many women do not feel safe at York.

Women's Centre volunteer Candy Potter calls the Downsview campus "the most dangerous in Canada."

Nikki Gershain, president of the York Federation of Students says more should be for women's safety on campus.

"In terms of safety," said Gershain, "York has tremendous work to do."

Violence haunts disabled people

by Lennox White

Emotional abuse is just as troubling an issue as physical abuse to people with disabilities, a York audience heard recently.

The threat of abuse is something disabled people must live with everyday. "People with disabilities are not seen as being empowered," says Mary Kocur, assistant coordinator to the abuse prevention program of Advocacy Resource Centre for the Handicapped.

The centre was one of the organizations for people with disabilities present at a forum on abuse against the disabled at York on Oct. 14.

No one is immune from the threat of abuse, but people with disabilities face additional risks, Kocur said. A study done at the University of Manitoba on abuse found that disabled people are one and a half to two times more likely to be abused than those who are not.

One group, Crime Risk Education for the Disabled is Essential educates the disabled on how to better protect themselves.

"Abuse can be subtle and systematic," said Scott McArthur, a representative of CREED.



McArthur gave accounts of people with cerebral palsy being arrested because they seemed drunk. He also talked about abuse from care givers such as "the silent treatment" where they will go about their jobs without acknowledging the presence of their disabled clients.

According to Kocur, new laws are also being created to further help protect the rights and freedom of people with disabilities. If Ontario Bill 74 is passed, official committees will be struck to act on their

behalf.

All speakers at the forum stressed that awareness on the issue of abuse against disabled people has to be raised in order to help find solutions.

correction

Margaret Watson is chief negotiator for York's Canadian Union of Educational Workers. In two articles last week Excalibur incorrectly identified Watson as local president of the union.

Excalibur regrets the error.