

# Horowitz speaks out on budget cuts

interview by Randal Smathers

During the ongoing debate over cutbacks in education funding, the Gateway has extensively quoted from a variety of sources. However, the Administration's input was limited to a few quotes spread throughout various articles, so we contacted University President Myer Horowitz for an interview on the subject.

Horowitz indicated that the four Alberta universities had been unofficially informed of the impending cutbacks last November, although the amount of the cuts was not revealed at that time.

During the next few weeks, a series of meetings further clarified the government position.

**"You can't zero in only on the fee component."**

"I think it's fair to say that by the third week in December . . . I certainly had a pretty good idea of what decision would be taken, and announced on January 9th," said Horowitz.

"I don't like the decisions which have been taken, but I don't think it's unimportant that his (Advanced Education Minister Dave Russell) style is very cordial and I never have any difficulty seeing him, and he always seems to be candid, and to share whatever information he has with me," Horowitz said.

The Board of Governors has not yet met to discuss the cutbacks in detail.

"Strictly by accident, the minister is visiting every institution, we agreed months ago . . . that he would come here on Thursday, January 15th, which was a week ago today. So sure, he met with the Board, he met with the Students' Union Executive, the Grad Students' Executive, the Academic staff, the Non-Academic staff, so sure there have been discussions, but if you mean has the Board made decisions as to what we're going to do for next year, the answer is clearly no, because at this institution, the Board deals with the matter only after it receives advice."

"I made it abundantly clear (in previous reports) that you can't zero in only on the fee component, only on numbers of positions because here we're growing, and the thought of cutting positions is distasteful," he said, indicating that "If you cut out one position, you affect the quality of what we're doing, especially at a time of growth."

On the subject of the expanding student population, Horowitz po-



President Horowitz is displeased with cuts.

photo Rob Schmidt

inted out the difficulty of predicting student numbers, especially compared to elementary and high schools. Currently there are large numbers of students returning to school after a hiatus.

"That has a lot to do with the perceived health of the economy," said Dr. Horowitz, "that you can't predict."

**The only way to achieve a balanced budget is to cut, cut, cut...**

Based on birthrate and high school graduation patterns, the student levels should have slightly decreased over last year, "But in fact we're 850 higher (than last year)," he said.

Horowitz also said that at almost 30 thousand, the U of A is nearing the point where "I don't think the institution should grow very much beyond where it is now." That assessment is based on available space and current facilities.

"We may have no alternative,"

he added.

The effect of cutting enrollment to match the cuts would be "that large numbers of people who deserve to have the opportunity of benefitting from a post-secondary education, wouldn't."

As far as the percentage of the cutbacks that will have to be borne by increased student fees, Dr. Horowitz said he "wished that (his recommendation to the GFC) could be close to zero, but it can't be. My own feeling is that it's got to be in the range of 10 to 20 per cent."

He pointed out that "that's a wide range," which will narrow as the decision-making process continues over the next two months. This estimate is based on the assumption that the government will allow more than the current limit of a six per cent increase.

"I think most students expect that," said Dr. Horowitz, also stating that to put the whole increase on fees would raise them "40 to 50 per cent . . . and I'd never be party to a proposal that would raise fees in one year by, let's say 50 per cent."

ment.

"That's utter nonsense . . . It goes without saying that in the interests of the institution, it is essential that I can continue to carry on conversations with the minister and with others," he said.

"I think people should just assume that I am doing my job in this very, very difficult time," said Dr. Horowitz, "I'm delighted that there are the activities there are . . . I think that it's important for students to say what they think."

"It has never been more upsetting than it is now, and the one thing I don't need is for someone in a responsible position . . . to complicate what is already a complicated situation by suggesting that

**"I marched on the Quebec legislature once upon a time..."**

the university isn't responding the way the university should. Of course we are, even though we don't have the luxury to get involved the way some individuals can," said Dr. Horowitz.

"I don't mind saying that along with other students I marched on the Quebec legislature once upon a time, but nobody in his or her right mind expects the university president to do that," he said.

Responding to the suggestion that the U of A is a fat institution, Horowitz said that despite what "a writer in residence who has popped in for a year" may say, "I don't know what people are talking about," in that respect. He noted that in 10 of the last 11 years, positions have had to be cut.

"I've already revealed that the only way to achieve (a balanced budget) is to cut, cut, cut. That's necessary and that's agonizing, but I don't think people should complicate the matter by saying it's easy, because it isn't," he said.

"Everybody has a simple solution, and the solution is always outside of that person's world. Everybody has a favorite program (and I'm using favorite in a perverse sense, of course), or department that they'd cut, you see, and if the President had any guts, that's what he would do! It's just that the program is always somebody else's."

"We have to deal with the situation, whatever it is, but that doesn't mean we have to oversimplify it, by suggesting to each other that it's easy to accomplish," said Horowitz, "I've heard some people almost suggest that it's a good thing, 'cause we're going to come out of it better people. That's a bunch of rubbish."

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