

Ontario students continue opposition; though fee strike loses momentum

Fees strike: moratoria cancelled

TORONTO (CUP) — The Executive of Ontario Federation of Students (OFS) Jan. 22 reversed its decision of two days earlier to organize three days of moratoria and study sessions protesting government cutbacks in post-secondary education.

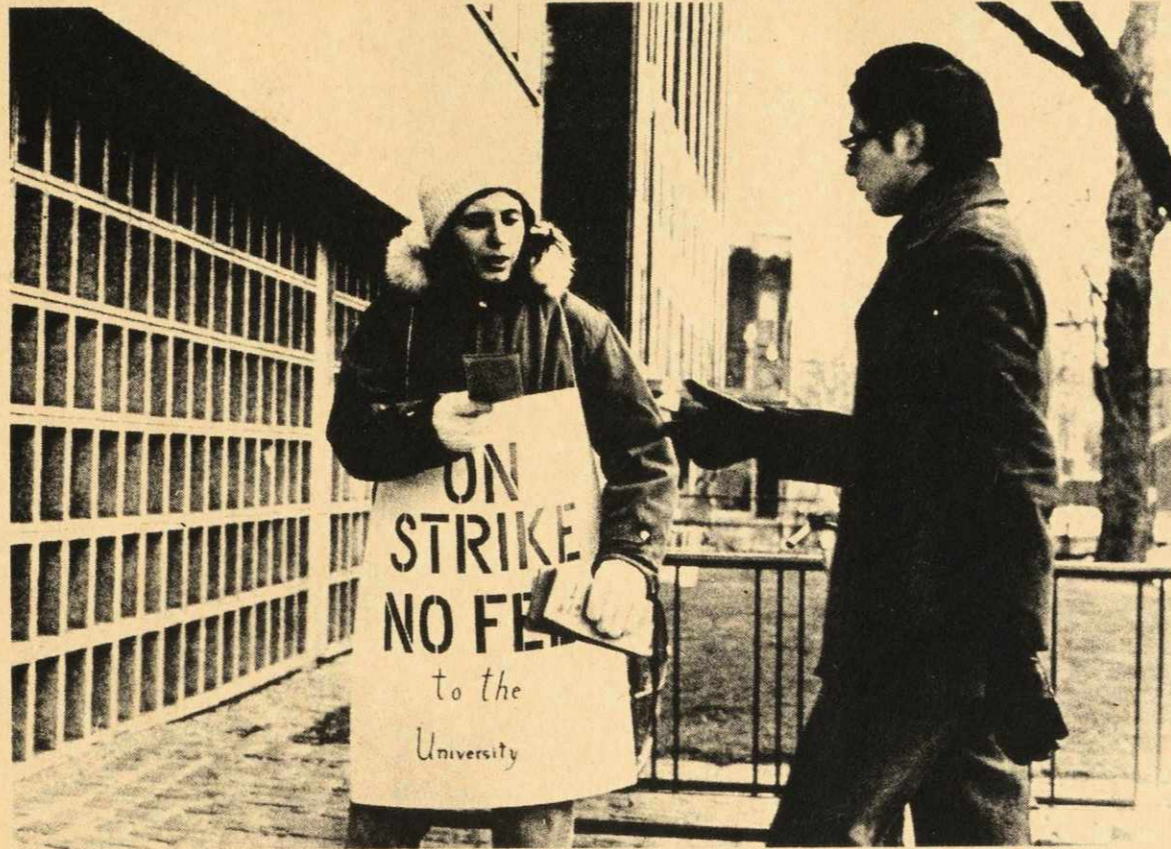
"Something like this would require a lot of enthusiasm," OFS executive member Shane Roberts explained yesterday. Roberts is the president of the University of Waterloo Students Federation.

"The solid support for such action was lacking from member institutions," OFS general co-ordinator Craig Heron reported. He had spent the morning of Jan. 22 telephoning member councils to inform them of the executive decision.

"The response was reasonably lukewarm," he said.

Except for one or two councils, OFS members greeted the proposal with reluctance or lack of enthusiasm, Roberts noted. The executive, realizing planning another action with less than enthusiastic support from a majority of its membership would be "a mistake," decided to cancel the moratoria. A demonstration outside provincial legislature last November fizzled for lack of active support.

Heron had argued against the initial executive decision in favour of holding the moratoria on the very grounds that in the end led to their cancellation. Roberts admitted there had been disagreement about the practicality of organizing the action, but said the executive had finally endorsed a compromise plan to spread the moratoria out over three days.



Student Surcharge Committee picketed 215 Huron Street, site of U of T's fees office.

Faculty cuts at Trent; President denounced

PETERBOROUGH (CUP) — Students and some faculty at Trent University have reacted angrily to a proposal calling for

massive faculty cuts to accommodate restrictive government educational policies.

Trent president Thomas Nind proposed January 19 the release of between 30 and 40 faculty members in the next 15 months, to cut a projected university deficit of \$5,000,000. He agreed to cancel classes Jan. 22 so students, faculty and staff could discuss the proposal in a day-long moratorium.

The official moratorium parallels one at Brock University last week (Jan. 18) where students are still occupying an administrative area protesting proposed firings. The Brock administration also cancelled classes for the day.

The Trent moratorium follows a call by the Ontario Federation of Students January 21 for its member student councils to organize moratoria and mass meetings against the province's cuts in educational spending, during a three-day period beginning January 29.

Lind's announcement of his proposal January 19 prompted a demonstration by more than 250 Trent Students that day. Trent Student Union chairperson Sue Genge charged Lind was capitulating to Ontario government pressure, and she urged the administration to join students in fighting Queen's Park.

Sociology professor Andrew Wernick said the situation in the universities is analogous to a production slowdown in factories when workers are laid off.

"The university has engaged in intellectual and cultural production and the provincial government has decided it no longer wants to finance intellectual production," he said. "Therefore, the university will have to lay off faculty."

Wernick proposed that all faculty members take a cut in pay to ensure no teachers will lose their jobs.

Nind said his proposal was not to be considered an edict. The board of governors and senate have both discussed it and he plans to meet with student

representatives January 23.

"I am looking for suggestions and guidance," he said. "I anticipate some modifications will be made. The budget review and priorities committee participated very little in the preparation of the proposals. The committee wanted leadership. The problems were too difficult for them."

Nind denied the Trent situation paralleled Brock's, pointing out that Brock's faculty firings take effect in September, while his proposal has the faculty leaving in 15 months.

"We have foreseen these difficulties for some time and are attempting to reduce our costs to within striking distance of our income. We hope the Ontario government will respond by meeting halfway. To date there has been no response from the provincial government," Nind said.

The faculty cuts would most severely affect Trent's science departments, according to Nind's plan. The president presented two alternatives: (1) amalgamating biology, chemistry and physics departments stressing ecological and environmental studies — thereby reducing faculty by eight to twelve; (2) combining chemistry with the physics departments and biology with geography to accomplish the same staff reduction.

Nind's plan would also amalgamate the French and Spanish departments and close the German department to release between two and four faculty members. Relocation of the geography department to the main Trent campus would reduce the maintenance and office staff now required in the separate buildings.

"I hope the students and the university as a whole will react positively after the initial shock," Nind said. "There may be some students who will seek a confrontation situation but I hope not. The proposals will, I hope, lend financial stability and flexibility to the university."

Indications are Trent students will look suspiciously on his advice.

Occupation at Laurentian against fees increase

SUDBURY (CUP) — Students at Laurentian University joined province wide actions against the Ontario government's educational policies Jan. 18, when they occupied the only operating elevator in the administration building.

The occupation took place just before a scheduled Laurentian senate meeting and the approximately 40 students succeeded in discouraging about half the senators from attending. Senate meetings are held on the 11th floor.

Students left the elevator after four hours, almost preventing the senate from mustering its quorum. They wanted to dramatize to senate members their opposition to ordered fee increases and hikes in the student awards loan ceiling. With the continuing strike by elevator maintenance employees, the administration has only one workable elevator.

The action followed a general meeting at which student council decided to call a moratorium on classes Jan. 24 to discuss the issues involved in the province-wide fees strike, organized to protest government policy.

More than 50 percent of Laurentian students have not paid their second-term fees, providing the strike with its strongest support in the province.

The occupation was also a symbol of support for students in an occupation at Brock University in St. Catharines to protest firings of faculty forced by cuts in government aid to the university.

The Brock students are continuing their occupation, with about 40 students remaining in the occupied area while others circulate petitions of support in the St. Catharines community.

They scored a major victory Jan. 20

when they convinced the board of trustees to hold an emergency meeting. The board issued a news release "expressing our concern" over the cuts, and arranged a meeting for Jan. 22 between Brock students and administrators and Ontario minister of colleges and universities Jack McNie.

At Laurentian, Jan. 24 the moratorium will bring students up to date on the government's moves and student actions across the province. A local labor leader will speak on the class aspect of the struggle. New Democratic Party provincial MLA Floyd Laughren from Nickel Belt will also speak at the meeting.

Students also intend to bring their case to the Laurentian board of governors when it meets Jan. 26. They want the board to discuss the government policies because its members were all appointed by the Conservative government and have since re-appointed themselves.

Student leaders believe the government policies will prevent students from working class families receiving higher education. They consider the action part of a plan to ensure only upperclass children have access to university.

Laurentian is the sixth Ontario campus where students have taken militant action against policy. Students at York University's main campus, York's Glendon College and the University of Western Ontario occupied their fees offices the week of Jan. 9 to 12 and convinced their administrations to release student award money to students before they paid their fees. A similar occupation at the University of Windsor that week failed.

The Brock action began Jan. 16.

Occupation may go on at Brock

ST. CATHARINES, ONT. (CUP) — More than 800 Brock University students attended a day of seminars Jan. 18 to discuss cuts in faculty and course offerings, while an occupation of administrative areas continued.

The administration cancelled classes for the moratorium but the next day students boycotted classes for an unofficial moratorium.

The Jan. 18 moratorium followed a general student meeting the day before attended by more than 1,300 students — a number unprecedented on the usually quiet Brock campus.

On Jan. 16 about 200 students took over the board of governors chambers and access-way to the president's office on the 13th floor of the Brock tower.

The occupation and moratoriums are designed to protest budget cuts resulting in the firing of some 15 faculty members and the removal of many courses from the calendar.

Provost Alan Earp said the administration sympathizes with the student position and therefore cancelled classes. Students met with administration officials Jan. 19 before holding another general meeting. They appear determined to remain until their demands for the revocation of the firings and course cuts are met.

The administration ordered the cuts after the provincial government cut back on money granted to universities.

The Jan. 18 moratorium climaxed with another well-attended general student union meeting, where students voted overwhelmingly to continue the occupation and moratorium.

Students have formed committees to distribute petitions in the St. Catharines community to gather support. They will present the petitions to the provincial government. Already several community groups have offered their support, although the students have met with strong, but predictable opposition from the conservative St. Catharines Standard, the daily newspaper.

The Brock board of governors met in emergency session Jan. 20. The board reportedly sympathizes with the student demands.

The Brock students have received telegrams of support from the Queen's University student council and other student organizations along with phone calls of support from St. Catharines citizens.

ST. CATHARINES (CUP) — Brock University students have put the pressure on their board of trustees, following a Jan. 22 meeting between Brock representatives and Ontario colleges and universities minister Jack McNie.

The students say unless a way is discovered to re-hire teachers dismissed

because of government educational cuts, they will escalate their continuing occupation to include Brock's administrative and financial offices. An occupation of administrative areas on the 13th floor of the Brock tower has been in progress for a week.

The board met Jan. 24 while students discussed future action at a general student union meeting Jan. 25. No word has yet been received on the outcome of these meetings.

The Brock delegation which met McNie included teacher and administration representatives, the board chairman and vice-chairman, and only one student, the union president Drew Davidson.

Davidson said McNie talked about a new financing system for universities "but he didn't say that would add anything to the university."

McNie said after the meeting: "We're trying to find a new way... the present formula (geared to enrollment) worked well for an expanding enrollment."

The government is trying to remain non-committal until it presents its budget in March, when university reaction would be minimal. Indications are the government hopes to raise the amount students are required to pay for education, while providing easier, larger loans, repayable as a surcharge on future income.

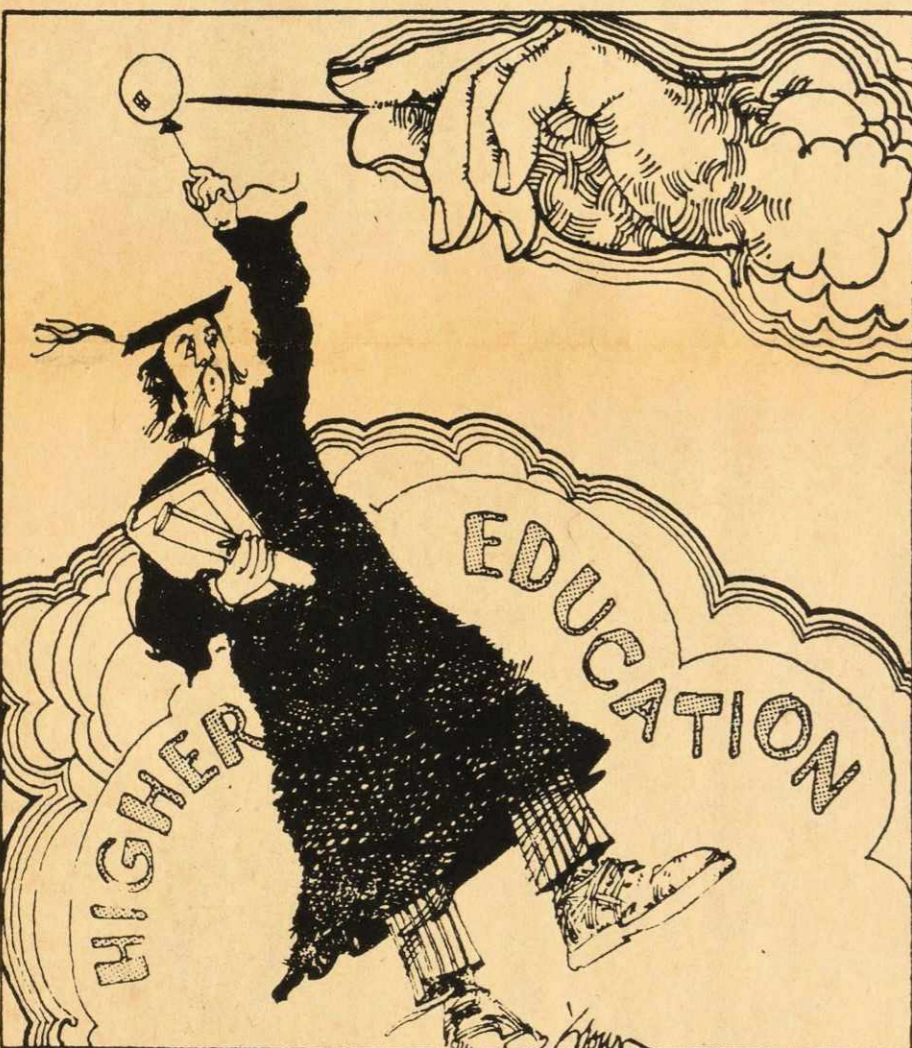
But Brock president James Gibson hopes the government will alter the basic income unit (BIU) to increase money available to Brock under formula financing. (The BIU is the weight assigned to students in various disciplines to determine how much each student will earn for the university in government grants.)

The Brock representatives at the meeting wanted McNie to either increase the BIU value, increase the grant Brock receives as a relatively new university, provide a supplementary grant for lower income universities or approve funding for graduate programs.

The delegation reported the results of the meeting to about 400 students later that day at a general meeting.

Students at the meeting were dissatisfied with Gibson's "wait-and-see" attitude. They discussed the possibility of occupying the administrative and finance offices to prove they are determined to win the fight against faculty firings. All this depends on the results of the board meeting Jan. 24 and the student meeting Jan. 25.

Meanwhile, students at Trent University in Peterborough extended their moratorium of classes from Jan. 21 into 22. The moratorium included an administration-ordered cancellation of classes to discuss a proposal from administration president Tom Nind for massive faculty and staff cuts to cover a deficit caused by restrictive government policy.



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