

Internships receive mixed reviews

BY CHRIS BODNAR AND DAVID COCHRANE

OTTAWA (CUP) — A federal internship program will not pay young people enough to live on, says Canada's largest student organization.

On Sept. 8, the government announced a \$90-million youth internship program that will provide one-year public sector jobs for more than 3,000 people between the ages of 15 and 30.

But the Canadian Federation of Students (CFS) is criticizing the program because of what it calls "poverty level wages".

"We don't criticize the internships themselves. It's great the government wants to do something about [youth unemployment] in some way," said Jennifer Story, the Federation's deputy chair. "But if you look at what they are paying... it isn't a living wage."

Interns will be paid between \$9,880 and \$15,000 for the year. But student debt loads average \$22,000 nationally and Story says with a \$400 monthly loan payment plus living expenses, the internships won't give people enough to live on.

"I think \$20,000 a year is a more reasonable figure," Story said.

Youth unemployment averaged almost 20 per cent this summer and most student jobs were only part time. And while the intern program is being hyped as a new initiative, it contains no new government money. It will be funded by the same Youth Employment Strategy money the Liberals announced in February just prior to calling the last election.

"If the federal government was truly

committed to this issue it would allocate the resources necessary to bring down youth unemployment in this country," Story said.

The program is a joint initiative between the federal government, the YMCA, and Career Edge, a non-profit organization providing private-sector internships.

It will be tested this fall with about 100 internships in five major cities: Halifax, Montreal, Toronto, Edmonton, and Vancouver.

The 3,000 projected internships will be phased in over the next three years at various federal departments, Crown corporations, and government agencies. The jobs will be aimed at unemployed and underemployed youth, who will be recruited by the YMCA and Career Edge.

Canada's other national student organization was less critical of the plan. Hoops Harrison, executive director of the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations (CASA), says the private

and public sector co-operative structure of the program is a good sign.

"It's a positive step because it's no longer one aspect of the workforce trying to solve the entire problem, because it's a joint problem," Harrison said.

At a media event to announce the program, Prime Minister Jean Chretien lauded the internships as a way to provide young people with valuable work experience. But even the Prime Minister says more needs to be done.

"We still have a difficult problem with youth unemployment," Chretien said.

Chinese leader declines honorary doctorate

BY DAN SEIBEL AND RICHARD CARLSON

VICTORIA (CUP) — The University of Victoria offered, but China's president will not accept an honorary degree.

Ottawa informed the university that because of other commitments, Jiang Zemin, will not be able to accept the honorary doctorate they planned to award him at a special convocation on Nov. 26.

But the controversial Jiang is still

scheduled to participate in the Asia Pacific Economic Co-operation leaders forum in Vancouver this November.

"Both students and administration are probably glad he's not coming," said Anita Zaenker, the academics director of UVic's student union.

"We're happy because there won't be a dictator receiving an honorary degree from UVic and the administration is happy they don't have to worry about protests on campus in November."

News of the proposed award was leaked to students through the Senate, generating anger among student groups, faculty, and local residents.

Jiang is head of China's military, and although the 1989 Beijing massacre took place before he became president, some opponents of the degree link him with the Tiananmen Square massacre and other human rights abuses.

"We oppose this award on behalf of the students who were killed, and continue to be killed, under

oppressive regimes," said Michael Conlon, president of the Graduate Students Society. "I am stunned that UVic would compromise its principles and reward someone who clearly has the blood of Tiananmen Square on his hands."

But some members of the university community didn't see the degree as controversial.

"Jiang is widely perceived as a moderate," says Ralph Crozier, a history professor who specializes in China and teaches a course on the Tiananmen Square massacre.

"Deng Xiaoping appointed Jiang after the Tiananmen Square massacre as he was not directly involved in it," he said. "He wasn't anywhere near Tiananmen Square and I don't believe he had any role."

Besides the protests from students, human rights organizations also spoke out against giving him the degree.

"What we are seeing in China is not a change," said Bob Goodfellow, managing director of Amnesty International.

A new report by the human rights organization states that China led the world in executions last year with more than 4,367.

Amnesty cites the example of Wu Shishen, a one-time editor of the New China News Agency, who was sentenced to 10 years in prison after releasing one of Jiang's speeches to the Hong Kong media.

Jiang personally intervened and had his sentence bumped up to life.

Amnesty also reports that thousands of government opponents and religious leaders — many of whom were convicted after unfair trials or held under administrative detention — continue to be detained.

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