

Rally protests underfunding

By GARRY MARR

Students from across the province gathered at Queen's Park last Thursday for an annual protest aimed at stopping government underfunding to post-secondary institutions.

The protest march began at UofT's Convocation Hall and culminated at Queen's Park where students were addressed by Ontario Federation of Students (OFS) chairperson Sheens Weir, NDP post secondary education critic Richard Johnston, PC critic Cam Jackson, and John Starkey, President of the Ontario University Confederation of Faculty Associations.

Weir began by telling demonstrators that underfunding adversely affects libraries and housing, and creates overcrowding in post-secondary institutions. She said that it was time government began to understand the importance of education on society.

Starkey told students the demonstration was "an indication of frustration." Starkey referred to the timing of the demonstration as critical because of the upcoming budget. He said the proposed 4.5% increase budgeted for university operational grants is not enough, and that 10% is needed to meet the needs of institutions. Because of the elimination of the five-year high school system next year, enrolment to post-secondary institutions is expected to rise substantially.

The next speaker was Johnston, who opened by telling students, "You have a right to expect adequate funding in the richest province." Johnston also noted that students had a right not to expect discrimination in housing. The Peterson government has promised to adopt legislation that will strike down local municipal exclusionary by-laws that make it illegal for four unrelated per-



The whining continues: In what has become an annual event, Ontario students gathered to march in protest of the persistent underfunding of universities in the province. The Liberal government demonstrating the priority it places on university issues did not send a representative speaker to the gathering.

sons to live in the same dwelling. The by-laws are seen as being heavily prejudiced towards students.

Cam Jackson has put forward a private members bill that would strike down the by-laws, but the Liberals have yet to support it. Johnston ended his speech by saying "(Students) have a right to go through education without a debtload the size of Third World countries."

Jackson was scheduled to speak next, but was met with derisive chants from a hostile crowd. Many people in the crowd refused to disassociate Jackson from the previous Conservative government, who were faced with the same types of demonstrations during their tenure. Jackson was met with calls of "you had your chance," and was eventually prevented from speaking.

Weir ended the rally saying, "This was only a beginning, you must take this back to your campuses." Tammy Hasselfeldt, director of

external affairs for the Council of York Students Federation (CYSF), was at the rally representing York. Hasselfeldt said she was disappointed by the turnout. While only a very few York students attended the protest," she added. "We're hoping it will give them (the Liberal government) a push, especially with the budget coming up."

Lynn McCleod, Minister of Universities and Colleges, had asked to speak at the rally but the OFS refused her request, according to Jim Strutt communications director at the OFS. Strutt said, "We find it strange that in the past she has had timetable troubles in meeting us."

Strutt termed the rally a success because of the "tremendous media coverage." Media were present from most of the major papers and radio and television stations. Ironically, however, student media were denied access to the press area at this student demonstration.

Ambiguous wording prompts political clubs' demand for funding from student council

By SUZANNE LYONS

Conflict over funding between the Canadian political associations at York and the Council of York Students Federation (CYSF) was brought to a head on February 9, 1988 when representatives of the respective organizations issued an open letter of complaint to Council.

"Like the others, we are also considered to be 'recognized' clubs which entitles us to everything from free classified advertising in *Excalibur* to table space in Central Square," said Norman Kester, Chairman of the New Democratic organization. "The only thing that we don't receive is funding."

The present policy at CYSF specifically denies official "recognition" to any club with political orientation. According to CYSF, "Political is defined as having to do with organization or action of individuals, parties or interests that seek to control appointment or action of those who manage affairs of state."

"The definition of political is ambiguous," said Rob Clark of the Jewish Students Federation, "because at the moment, all clubs are potentially political."

Representatives of all three political associations argue that CYSF unduly discriminates against their respective clubs due to the ambiguous nature of the definitive clause. Professors David Dewitt of the Political Science Department said, "Under the current definition, the York Student Movement Against Apartheid (YSMAA) is definitely political. But then again, with this definition, who isn't?"

During the controversy over funding YSMAA in the fall of 1986, then-CYSF president Reya Ali agreed that "YSMAA is political," but added, "Due to the mass support for this

humanitarian cause, an exception for funding would be made."

When asked to disclose current membership levels, spokespersons of the three political associations declined to reveal specific numbers. They feel that as a group, the Progressive Conservatives, Liberals and New Democrats represent a substantial amount of the student body.

Gerard Bais, President of the Progressive Conservative club, said, "While the importance of other interest groups at York should not be underestimated, we believe that we can provide more enlightenment to students as a whole because we focus on a variety of Canadian issues." Renato Fellin, President of the Liberal association, added, "We can live off the membership funding on a day-to-day basis. What we are asking for is sufficient funding to support the special events like model parliaments, excursions and social affairs that invite the participation of all students."

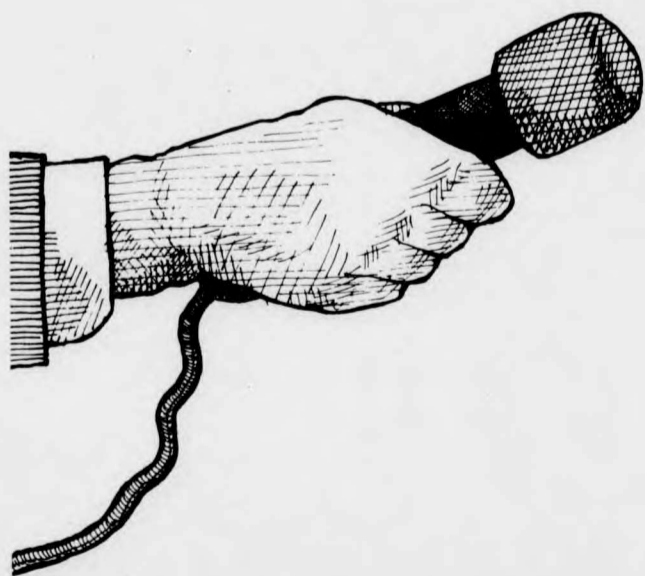
The representatives of the organizations were unable to suggest how Council might administer funds appropriately to each of the respective political groups. "It is certainly a subject of contention," Bais said, "but at this point, we are merely attempting to establish the principle of the argument."

At the present time, all three political clubs rely solely upon the contribution of members to fund various activities. Brian Harling of the Ontario New Democratic Party said, "We would like to contribute funds, but unfortunately, we don't have the resources to do so. The party is not wealthy as an organization to fund youth clubs within universities."

The CYSF will be debating on whether political clubs should get funding at the meeting this week.

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