

# Prof claims students should foot whole university bill

by Ken Burke

In this era of government cut-backs and fiscal restraint, universities are scrambling for new means of funding to stay alive. But the solution offered by Dalhousie Economics Professor Dr. John Graham may not cause students to jump for joy — Graham's concept includes hiking tuition by thousands of dollars, in Dalhousie's case to \$11,000.

In a public lecture held at Acadia University on November 18, Graham said students should pay the full cost of attending university as they are the principal beneficiaries of a university education. "I feel it is a preferable way of financing universities," he said in a recent interview with the *Gazette*.

Graham, a member of the federal government's newly-appointed council of economic advisors, feels his system is the best means of ensuring a stable base for university finances, as governments are cutting back on education funding. "One of the virtues of this scheme is that it would tilt the financing toward the private," he said. This is a way for universities to secure their funding base.

Graham said the percentage of university costs made up by tuition is only 10 per cent of the total. The remainder is mainly covered by government. While Graham suggests that students should pay one hundred per cent of that cost, he also said governments would have to continue funding at their current rate — but exclusively through loans, scholarships, and bursaries.

"The federal government has been expressing its concern over the amount of funding it's supplying compared to the provinces," said Graham. "If they fund through students (in loans, scholarships, and bursaries), they would be given direct credit for that money," he said.

In order for any of Graham's proposals to be effective, they would have to be applied evenly across the country, he said. "If fees



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went up in just one province, there would be a stampede away from those universities," said Graham.

Because of the increase in bursaries and scholarship funds, Graham said a user-pay system would not discriminate against those with less money. The bursaries would be more connected to need than is currently the case, and those with an "ability to pay" would be forced to take a larger share of the tuition.

"If we have a high proportion of students from the upper income classes, then we should be getting a higher share from those people," he said.

"Students from low-income families should not have to incur a higher amount of loans than they can afford," he said.

Graham said the question of accessibility was largely misunderstood. "Accessibility should be based on people's ability and interest, not just wanting to attend," he said.

In addition to increasing tuition to several times its current rate, Graham said universities should rethink their academic priorities. He favours focus on the "historic core" of university courses in the arts, sciences, and social sciences. "When we consider the really important contributions a university education

makes, it's in these disciplines," he said.

Graham added that medicine, law, and engineering would probably be included in this streamlined plan, because of their traditional association with university.

Other, more technically oriented courses, should be taught in vocational schools and post-secondary technical institutes, said Graham.

In order to insure that higher tuition would not discourage students from attending university, Graham said there were several steps to take. These included weighting the first year of university towards bursaries instead of loans, and making student loans interest-free for the first two years after graduation.

"The first year of university should be regarded differently," said Graham. "Bursaries should be substantial so that good students aren't discouraged from attending."

Scholarships play a major role in Graham's proposal. Since the highest achievers in their fields "will be making the most important contributions to society" according to Graham, the best students should be funded more by society than by personal contributions.

"When you get to research and theoretical study, then the benefits are mainly to society, instead of just the student," said Graham.

# CFS pulls through for UdeM students

OTTAWA (CUP) — Canadian Federation of Students staff workers are anxiously awaiting signs that an unexpected break will heal wounds created by a bitter split at their recent conference.

Delegates meeting in Victoria Nov. 8 to 13 for CFS's semi-annual conference voted against giving \$500 towards legal costs for students charged in an eight-day occupation of the Université de Moncton administration building in April. Riot gear-equipped police broke up the occupation at 4:00 am Easter Sunday.

A month later, the U de M delegation stole the show at CFS's Charlottetown conference. Delegates gave them a standing ovation and promised support. Brenda Coté, one of the occupation leaders, was elected CFS chair.

But a lot can change in six months.

The U de M students received little support outside the Atlantic and Pacific regions of CFS. The CFS

executive blamed this on the occupation's "complex nature".

And the motion to give \$500 to the Moncton Students' Defence Fund was rejected after treasurer Steve Quigley said CFS should not spend unbudgeted money.

Quigley successfully argued that although CFS should support the U de M occupiers, the federation must be financially responsible. He said CFS should ask its members, many of whom have more money than CFS, to donate to the defense fund.

Some delegates countered that CFS had to send the money if its existence as a national student organization was to be meaningful.

Hours of debate and a series of amendments followed. Quigley's amendment, that CFS would donate the money if it received any unbudgeted revenues, finally passed. Delegates also agreed to send letters and telegrams supporting the students and condemning the administration.

This was not enough for U de M delegate Eric Roy. He broke down and cried and left the conference with plans to recommend the U de M withdraw its prospective membership.

The dispute was given an ironic twist Nov. 24 when the board of governors at BC's Langara College voted to release about \$7,000 in CFS membership fees it had frozen in September. The board argued that less than half the students had voted in the membership referendum even though the decision to join CFS was overwhelming.

CFS executive officer Diane Flaherty is nervous about the fallout from the split, but hopes students alienated by the conference's decision will be satisfied by the turn of events.

"I would hope that the U de M ... knows CFS is in full support of them," said Flaherty. "We are very happy to be able to give them this donation, and will encourage our members to do the same."

# GRAWOOD LOUNGE

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