

EXCALIBUR

Weekly

Volume 16 No. 24

York's Community Newspaper

Thursday, March 18, 1982

Students rally to protest underfunding

Hundreds descend on legislature

Doug Whittall

In the midst of a driving rain, an estimated 1500 university and community college students descended on the provincial legislature last Thursday, to protest the underfunding of post-secondary education in Ontario.

Despite the steady drizzle, the high-spirited crowd was in the mood to demonstrate against operating grant cutbacks and tuition fee increases.

The rally was at its most intense, when Frank Drea, Minister of Community and Social Services took the podium in his capacity as acting education minister. Drea told his belligerent audience to "listen to me: you should be thanking Dr. Stephenson instead of wasting your time in the rain." After being shouted down by cries of "bullshit" and "save us from Davis", he told the crowd to "go talk to Ottawa and the people who work for a living to pay two-thirds of your way."

FALLEN IN RANK

Drea berated the students and stated that "no other province can match our record for yearly operating grant increases above inflation." But figures released by York President H. Ian Macdonald's office Wednesday, show that over the last five years, Ontario has fallen in rank among the provinces in funding, dropping from sixth to ninth place overall — the worst record in Canada. Drea went on to ask, "How many of you, when you're out working, will be willing to give money to your institutions? Not many."

Ontario Federation of Students chairperson Barb Taylor, whose organization sponsored the rally, vowed to return to Queen's Park every year until something is done to force the government to listen to student problems. Taylor, who was barred from the podium for most of the afternoon by an overzealous security guard, spoke to a sparse crowd of diehards. Most of the crowd has left to seek shelter from the downpour.

ACCUSED GOVERNMENT

Various labour leaders, including Ontario Public Services Employees Union Head Sean O'Flynn, and Wally Majesky, president of the Metropolitan Toronto Labor Council, addressed the protestors. Canadian Union of Educational Workers' OISE representative Seymour Kanowitch accused both levels of government of "ruining post-



Getting Screwed: Ryerson president Steve Guigley graphically gets his message across at last Thursday's anti-cutbacks rally. Guigley and his unidentified friend led the protestors' march to Queen's Park.

secondary education with vicious administration of Reganomics, MacEachenomics, and Davisomics." Kanowitch also announced that CUEW members at OISE had voted overwhelmingly in favour of strike action in response to OISE's refusal to allow wage increases of 8.6 per cent. "It's not something we want to do," he said, "it's something we're forced to do."

POSITIVE RESPONSE

Of the seven speakers who attacked the government's policies, N.D.P. education critic Tony Grande drew the loudest positive response by praising the demonstrators' "guts". Liberal Sean Conway, who was named deputy leader last Friday, received polite applause for his statement of support on behalf of the opposition party.

Before marching to Queen's Park the crowd gathered at Ryerson Polytechnical Institute.

The first of two York buses arrived as British student leader David Aaronovitch left the microphone. Aaronovitch, who had come to York the previous day to speak at an embarrassingly unattended Moot Court anti-cutback forum, delivered a rousing speech, urging students to "prove education is a right, and not a privilege for the rich". Aaronovitch also said he was impressed with the heartiness of

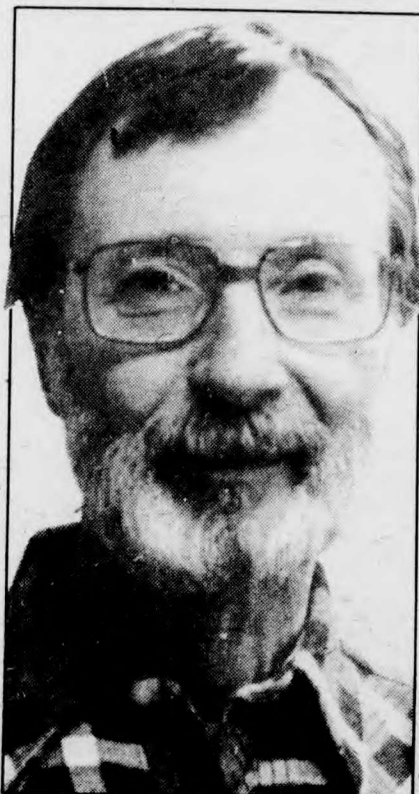
the protestors who braved the rain to express their displeasure with government funding levels.

By the time the second bus had arrived, the procession led by a student carrying an effigy of federal Finance Minister Allan MacEachen and another wearing a symbolic golden screw that looked like a Hollywood gag arrow, was already across Yonge

Street. Four abreast and the length of a city block, the crowd made its way up University Avenue toward the legislature buildings, chanting, "They say cutback, we say fightback". Once at Queen's Park the column of York and Ryerson demonstrators joined fellow students from the University of Toronto, Humber College, Guelph,

Georges Vanier, and George Brown College.

Thursday's protest was one of several similar demonstrations involving a total of 15,000 students across the country. The nation-wide protests was organized and sponsored by the Canadian Federation of Students.



Howard Buchbinder, chairman of York's faculty association.

Provincial conciliator to join contract talks

Doug Whittall

The Ontario Ministry of Labour has appointed a conciliator who will try to bring the administration and the York University Faculty Association back to the bargaining table, before YUFA's contract expires on April 30.

YUFA chairperson Howard Buchbinder says March 25 has been set as the conciliation date because the union and the administration have not come closer to an agreement since the last negotiating session, held Feb. 25.

Bill Farr, Vice-President of Employee and Student Relations has not confirmed the conciliation day with Buchbinder. When informed about YUFA's intention to return to negotiations Farr replied, "If he (Buchbinder) says so, I guess

we're going to meet."

Farr, who has questioned the union's desire to bargain in good faith in the past, believes, "The union's original demands, counting pensions, were for an increase of 39.4 per cent. After rejecting our proposal they came down .4 per cent off the original, however, pension demands are difficult to cost."

YUFA's offer was made after the last bargaining session, where the University presented the union with a total package representing an increase of 11.3 per cent. The faculty association did not consider this acceptable because, "the actual across the board benefit to the average YUFA member is seen to be approximately 9.4 per cent."

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