

Bovey on tuition fees and subsidization

Conclusion of the Graham Thompson's interview with Edmund Bovey, Chairman of the Commission on the Future Development of the Universities of Ontario.

Q. You have mentioned you might be raising fees: "Fees might be increased, for example, from 15 to 20 to 25 percent of total cost with a corresponding increase in OSAP (Ontario Student Aid Program)." Now, why would the university system be going for an increase from 15 to 25 percent?

A. Well, there are a number of reasons you can think of. Again we haven't reached any conclusions. We've thrown it out for discussion.

A question I would ask you to consider, or anyone else is, the public perception of universities is very important to the university system.

There may be—and I don't know this—but there may be a feeling on a good part of the public that there should be a move towards more user pay than has been the case. And, in fact, if that were done it might mean the universities would get a better perception from a lot of the public. Now, I don't know that.

There's another angle, too, involved in this, and that is the equity—it's not entirely related to what you just said, but it is on the matter of fees. That is, should a medical student pay more than an arts student. He's going, to very likely, graduate into a high income bracket once he's established. But, then there's another factor, too. The fees, that the university charges, are in many respects, money or income they receive, that does not depend on big daddy. It's money they receive which in some ways they can feel freer to use as they see fit. They may not be able to because they may need it just to meet their operating costs.

Q. So you're saying that it's not distance education that is the problem in itself, but the way it's organized?

A. Yes, and in this point in time in Ontario, it's not organized to any great extent. There's some great examples of it, but they're not working together; only because there's been no move made by anybody in that direction . . .

If you're going to have distance education you better make it as attractive as possible and as universal as possible.

Q. Getting back to user fees, I noticed on the political debate the other night that all three leaders wouldn't touch user fees with a 10-foot pole. They all said they're going to maintain the universal medicare system and we're not going for user fees. So, I would think the general public would be against user fees.

A. But you're talking about the medical side.

Q. Do you think there's a difference?

A. It has been suggested to me that there is a reasonable segment out there, in relation to the universities, that are not as supportive of them (subsidies) as they are in the health care system.

Q. Would this be a poll or something that's been taken within the government?

A. No. We haven't got a poll involved at this point in time. We're going to wait and hopefully get a consensus of some sort from the universities, students, and faculty. It's a real subject for debate . . .

Q. It is . . .

A. . . . There's some jurisdictions like Australia and California where they don't charge any fees. I think in California you have to be in state. If you come from out of state you have to pay.

Q. Would you see an argument for that in Ontario?

A. I really don't know, but it's one of those things we're looking at. I suppose you could argue that if 15 percent of the cost of post-secondary education is coming from the user now, what do you replace it with if there are no fees? Something has got to come out of some other source of revenue.

Q. Another related issue is part-time students. A former president of the part-time students association in Canada, Jessie May Rowntree, noticed in your paper that as an alternative to attending university directly you mentioned distance education for part-time students as one of the options you're looking at. She said one of the problems with that was, with the Waterloo program for instance, people have a real problem transferring credits from Waterloo to other universities. So, within the part-time association, at present, they see it as a second-rate alternative.

A. Well, I think she's got a very good point and again that's something in our review, or in our investigation of distance education.

There's quite a bit of literature now developing, but if you're going to go into distance education—and there's a benefit to it, certainly a big benefit—you should have, I think, some kind of universality of credits. Otherwise you're not encouraging people to go into it.

Q. Another concern raised by some people at York was if the university system moves in the direction of specialization and areas of concentration, will it be harder for the universities to meet the surrounding area's general interests?

A. I don't think so, Graham. I don't think that specialization in actual practice is liable to be that demanding, or that much of a total of the universities' activities that there still isn't lots of room for that general education. *cont'd on page 15*

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CUEW talks stalemated

major issues. The administration's position, according to a CUEW report on the present stage of contract negotiations, seems to be that "their hands are tied," and they cannot, rather than will not, negotiate.

On the issue of wage increases Farr reiterated his argument that provincial guidelines are preventing the administration from offering CUEW more than a five percent raise.

Doyon wrote in this month's CUEW newsletter that the administration had argued that its five percent increase offer "had nothing to do with provincial government restraint legislation."

"The administration's negotiating team, rather, said their hands were tied by the Board of Governors which passed a motion limiting our wage increase to five percent," he wrote. In a later interview Doyon said, "The administration are the ones intent on showing no respect to their employees; my analysis is that it is the BOG who are holding the students to ransom."

If a settlement is not forthcoming in the conciliation meetings, CUEW will likely be in a position to strike early this term, probably within the month.


YUSA dispute

health and safety concerns, job evaluations, equal pay for work of equal value, the hiring of non-union personnel to fill new positions while layoffs of YUSA members are increasing, and wages.

YUSA would be in a legal position to strike by the end of the month if conciliation efforts fail.

A YUSA strike would not, however, disrupt all clerical services on campus. Some services would still be maintained by the sizeable number of non-union, mainly part-time, staff.

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NOTE: Ayn Rand takes part in the question-and-answer periods of lectures number 5 through number 12 of this series.

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