Renegade hunger strike divides OFS

by Peter Stathis

o draw attention to university underfunding, about one dozen student council executives took part in a 48-hour hunger strike from July 31 to August 1. The event culminated with an invitation extended to the three party leaders to join the protesters in their "break-fast"

The media event that took place on the front lawn of Queen's Park was meant to coincide with Premier David Peterson's election call which was criticized as political opportunism. Executives from nine campuses took part in the protest, including representatives from UofT, Western, McMaster. Waterloo and York

Cock and Bull

Coffee Shop and Pub

According to a press release, organizers named the hunger strike, Underfed and Underfunded to link "their hunger with the hunger felt by Ontario Universities." They claimed they would fast until the provincial leaders made post-secondary education funding a priority in their campaigns. Steve Deighton, President of Western's student council,

stated, "Ontario is near the bottom in Canada in university funding levels, yet it is Canada's wealthiest province

Mitch Blass, VP (External) of YFS told Excalibur that this group of student leaders wanted to bring up the issue of underfunding (money coming from the government) separately from the issue of tuition (money coming from the students). According to Blass, some executives did not (and do not) support all the OFS (Ontario Federation of Students) mandates because they believe some of them are unrealistic and unattainable such as zero tuition.

education." Kim Speers, VP (University Affairs) at University of Waterloo, claimed that the hunger strike only served to alienate some student leaders from the OFS and divide what potentially could be a very strong organization.

Blass admitted that the protesters were "not trying to step on anyone's toes, but underfunding [was] something all students should fight against." John Vellinga, President of Waterloo's Federation of Students stated, "the Peterson Liberals may cut our funding to the bone, even let us starve on the lawn of Queen's Park, but they cannot ignore us!"

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The hunger strike was quickly denounced by many university de-legitimize, the provincial student movement already in existence."

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The hunger strike was not in place of the OFS campaign, but was just another aspect of it. According to Blass, the organizers wanted to take a step independent of the official OFS line. It was a question of freedom of conscience rather than being bound to a collective strategy. "Do we always have to consult with OFS before we act as individuals?" Blass rhetorically asked Excalibur.

When reached for comment, OFS campaign researcher Chris Lawson said that OFS was concerned about the "timing and tactics of the protest," but otherwise remained neutral to the protest, because its membership was split in terms of supporting the hunger strike or castigating it.

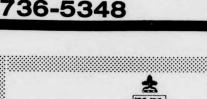
student executives as an irresponsible and renegade act that jeopardized the efficacy of the OFS strategies for the election campaign. In a press release directed to the protesters, Jean Ghomeshi, President of YFS, divorced himself from the event, saying, "all you will succeed in accomplishing with your protest, is to compete with, if not totally

Janet Piper, President of Ryerson's Student Union, also withheld her college's official support. She stated that a hunger strike was too extreme a measure to be taken to meet the "issues of elec-

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September 10 - September 15

Monday - Thursday	8:30 am - 9:30 pm
Friday	8:30 am - 5:00 pm
Saturday	10:00 am - 5:00 pm

September 17 - September 22

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Monday - Thursday	9:30 am - 8:30 pm
Friday	9:30 am - 5:00 pm
Saturday	10:00 am - 3:00 pm

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STORE HOURS

GLENDON CAMPUS

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Friday	9:30 am - 5:00 pm
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