

EDITORIAL

An obscure issue in the campaign

In the last decade, tuition fees at York have increased over 75 per cent. Other universities across the country fare even worse. Take, for example, the University of New Brunswick where students who paid \$740 in 1978-79 for a full-course load are now paying \$1775. It's a national trend: student contributions to university operating budgets have been steadily increasing. So, why such sobering statistics now?

On November 21 students will cast their ballots, giving little thought to each party's stance on the issue of university funding. Why should they, when education is clearly a provincial responsibility? Unfortunately, it's misperceptions such as these that have led to the languishing state of universities. Federal transfer payments make up a large part of the post-secondary budget, and in the past 10 years Ottawa's commitment to universities has been waning.

In 1979-80, federal transfer payments provided 52 per cent of the post secondary budget, but that dropped to a disturbing low of 43 per cent in 1986-87. Fingers can be pointed at the Liberals, who drastically reduced their financial contribution to PSE under Trudeau's six-and-five programmes in 1983. The Conservatives' record is even worse. Since they came to power five years ago, the university budget has lost close to a billion dollars.

But the provinces must also shoulder the blame. In 1977, they pressured Ottawa into passing legislation which would allow them to spend federal transfer payments as they saw fit. Before, transfer payments were earmarked for specific ministries. The motive behind the provinces' move was quite simple: spend the money where they could get the greatest political return.

Universities soon lost priority in the provincial government's annual budget. Why? Because ruling provincial parties knew they could transfer funds away from post-secondary education without losing any votes. As an aide to the Minister of Colleges and Universities said: there's little political will to prevent any provincial government from doing so. And again that lack of political will has prevented the issue from gaining any kind of prominence during this campaign.

So far only the NDP has come out with a comprehensive platform on post-secondary education. They call for a 50-50 split between Ottawa and the provinces, plus a one-time infusion of funds to redress the past decade of underfunding. It's a programme that's desperately needed. The other two parties have barely addressed the issue, let alone presented a platform. And why should they when they know how few votes such an initiative will garner?

With free trade dominating the debate, it's a pity that issues like university funding will never be heard. With or without free trade, Canada's ability to compete in the global marketplace is highly dependent on the quality of our post-secondary education system.

But federal parties won't find it necessary to address this reality until they are forced to by the electorate. Just think of the potential influence students could have if they were a solid voting bloc. Then think about the sad state of universities, and ask yourself why post-secondary education never makes the agenda at election time.



HMMM . . . LET'S SEE. Perhaps expanding the lot will do the trick

e x c a l i b u r

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LETTERS

A courtesy removed

I would like to thank CYSF and *Excalibur* for their cooperative effort in removing a privilege offered to colleges. The department of Housing and Food Services has instructed Accounting that scrip will only be accepted by University caterers. So the privilege of using scrip to pay for the courtesy account has been taken away. The CYSF should have realized that scrip obtained through movie admissions (Reel & Screen), which would later be used in the payment of the courtesy account, would not be under the approval of the University. For this reason I cannot even begin to fathom the reason they sought to make the situation more visible by advertising. I wonder if you took lessons in subtlety from "Rambo."

I cannot let *Excalibur* escape blame as the partner to the du-dummy escapades being outlined. What did you expect to happen when you approached Norman Crandles about a subject which by its very nature was questionable? Maybe *Excalibur's* reporters should think about the possible effects of their stories. The handling of this story reflects the inefficiencies which were

part of its referendum. It showed a lot of heart but little head.

I urge both groups to keep up the good work.

Sarcastically,
Darren Laval

The CYSF doubletalk

Re: "CYSF vs. OFS: Round two," 3 November.

I nominate CYSF External Commissioner Dwight Daigneault for the York Doublespeak Award.

CYSF says that its pullout from the Ontario Federation of Students (OFS) without first holding a referendum is legitimate because CYSF pays the \$30,000 annual membership fee, not the students.

Yet Daigneault says he is surprised that the OFS sent its bill so early, because "they [OFS] usually bill us at the end of the year because of the nature that we receive funds from students."

I remind the CYSF that it is funded solely by York students. If the CYSF doesn't pay its bill, that money must be returned to the students.

Will my refund be mailed, or may I pick it up at the CYSF office?

T.J. Roberts

Art treatment insensitive

I was very disappointed by your treatment of The George Rickey Sculpture (front page, Nov. 3/88). Not only was the artist's name not given, but it was obvious that the person who wrote the copy beneath the photo had not taken the time to look and respond to the work itself, let alone find out who made the piece or research the work of the artist. I think that a student newspaper is a good forum for discussion of public art, especially work shown around campus; however, the work should be introduced in a knowledgeable, sensitive manner — not used as filler! In this way, we can have a constructive, informative dialogue about art.

Karyn Ross

Rugby teams not barbers

Dear *Excalibur*,
(RE: October 27, 1988. "A Day in the Life at York" page 12, the picture subtitled 12, the picture subtitled

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