

York students may get health insurance plan by September 1989

By PIERRE IMLAY

York students may have a comprehensive health insurance plan as early as September 1989 if a proposal now being considered by CYSF is passed in a university-wide referendum this fall.

CYSF Director of Student Services and Communications Doug Bies recently released a discussion paper examining the options of what kind of plan would best suit York students. The programme which he recommends is one coordinated by the Canadian Federation of Students (CFS), an organization that will be responsible for consulting the insurance broker, promoting the programme and monitoring the cost and quality of the programme on a regular basis.

One feature of the CFS programme which Bies especially likes is the identity card system which allows students to get prescriptions covered by the plan immediately instead of waiting for a cash reimbursement from the insurance company. The old system of sending in receipts for reimbursements was a cumbersome one, says Bies. "It required up front cash and a wait of about two months for the refund. This way students can get the coverage they need right away, just by showing their card."

Each prescription charged to the card, says Bies, will be accompanied with a deductible which will be a percentage of the cost of the drug. So, if the deductible is 20%, then students purchasing a \$10 prescription on the card are expected to pay \$2 for the order up front. Bies believes this credit card system will be especially convenient for students while a cen-

tral computer system will ensure that claims are processed quickly.

"The plan could also save students a substantial amount of money, because it ensures that pharmacists use generic drugs over commercial brands which often cost a lot more," says Bies. Other assets of the programme include coverage for accidental death and dismemberment, accidental injuries, therapeutic treatment, and ambulance coverage. The plan will even provide for a tutor at \$10 an hour for a limit of \$300, if a student cannot attend class due to a certain health reason.

The cost of joining the plan will be \$40 per student, says Bies and that will be added on to a student's tuition fee if the plan is approved in the fall referendum. Bies notes that those students who already have such health coverage can elect to opt out of the plan and avoid paying the fee.

An issue which students will have to address during the referendum is the kind of options they would like the plan to include which will ultimately affect the cost of the programme. For example, Bies points out that one plan covers oral contraceptives, yet that will increase the cost for health insurance coverage by 28%.

Bies feels that it is important for York to join the two-year-old plan of which 10 universities already belong. He says that the CYSF plans to hire a researcher for the summer to further investigate how the plan can be implemented on campus, and begin getting together a campaign to sell the idea to students next fall.

Conference discusses Glasnost

By JIM OAKES

Though glasnost may not live up to the public's expectations, the new Soviet policy of openness still warrants Western support. This was the view presented by many experts on the Soviet Union at an international conference held at Texas A&M's University over reading week in February. I was one of six York students who were in attendance for the conference.

In his speech to 200 student delegates from across the world, Strobe Talbott, Time Magazine's Washington Bureau Chief, indicated that he does not believe Mikhail Gorbachev's perestroika (economic restructuring) will be successful. According to Talbott, economic reforms are needed in the Soviet Union to combat unproductivity, inefficiency, and economic stagnation. He sees the USSR as "only a superpower in size and military might," and called the Soviet Union a "muscle-bound giant with a pea brain."

On the topic of glasnost Talbott noted, "We can be sure that Gorbachev is not a liberal and glasnost does not mean a commitment to human rights. According to Talbott, too many people in the West have a misconception that glasnost will lead to a Soviet Union ruled under some type of Jeffersonian democracy. However, Talbott does feel that the programme's success is in the interest of the West and Americans should support Gorbachev's attempts at reforms.

Dr. Robert German, Director of Analysis for the Soviet Union in the State Department, is even less optimistic about Gorbachev's proposed reforms, and says that "The US will never have normal relations with the Soviets because of our superpower status." German explained that US-Soviet relations have been a failure in the past, giving him little reason to believe that they will improve under Gorbachev. German does not consider Gorbachev to be any different



Texas A&M University: site of the conference which brought together students to discuss Soviet glasnost.

from past Soviet leaders, so he rejects the possibility of glasnost improving future relations.

Alexander Belonogov, Soviet Ambassador to the UN, disagreed with German's view and said that "Our two countries must learn the art of peaceful coexistence." He sees openness as the best way to build this kind of confidence between the superpowers. Other Soviet speakers expressed the same sentiments.

The final Soviet official to speak was Igor Khripunov, First Secretary of the Soviet embassy to the US. He compared the Soviet Union to "a strong solid building in need of renovations," and said that the USSR is currently in a pre-crisis situation.

Professor Jerry Hough of Duke University expressed a similar point of view: "The US and USSR have got to get out of the arms race and back into the economic race," if they are to retain their status as superpowers. According to Hough, both superpowers have been wasting precious resources on weapons while countries like Japan and West Germany have been directing their resources to economic development.

Probably the most informative and interesting speaker at the con-

ference was Dr. Dimitri Simes, Los Angeles Times columnist, CBS News Consultant, and Director of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Originally from the USSR and educated at Moscow State University, he now resides in the US. According to Simes, great internal problems threaten the USSR and they cannot be ignored any longer. The impetus behind the reforms will not disappear, yet in Simes' opinion, Gorbachev's crusade to change the country may produce some unexpected results.

"Gorbachev is the beneficiary of previous failed leadership," he told students, "it would take great mistakes for people to start turning against him." Even so, Simes cautioned that Gorbachev has perhaps two years to deliver the "goods" of perestroika and glasnost before he loses this support. And Simes also pointed out that perhaps the success of these reforms may not be in the interests of the West. "Gorbachev is an admirable man, but remember first and foremost that he is an admirable adversary."

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