

# British universities face massive cuts

by Wes Oginski

Students attending post-secondary education institutions in Great Britain are about to face an average cut of 17 per cent in government financing over the next three years. According to *The Times* of London on July 3rd, 1981.

These cuts contradict education policies set after the Second World War, according to Phil Woolas, the General Secretary of the University of Manchester Students Union in a communique to U of A Graduate Students' Association President Niall Shanks, who is from Great Britain.

"Taking the University system as a whole the effects of the cuts are severe. The principle of university places for all those able and willing to take them up, developed in this country since 1945, has been abandoned," Woolas tells Shanks.

Since 1945, any student who is academically able to take higher education have generally been given a chance to do so. This includes granting at the municipal level as well as the national level.

"What is new about the present distinction of policy is that this can no longer be assumed," Shanks says.

Each university works under a government quota set financially. Thus each year a university has a set number of places it can fill.

"The government has a quota of students it allows each university to have in the sense that it will only award the per capita grant on the basis of the quota," explains Shanks. "In practice, universities have more students than was specified in their own specific quotas, and consequently they have students for which they are receiving no revenues from the government."

"When the government says

it is going to reduce the number of places, it means it is going to restrict still further the existing quotas," he adds.

*The Times* also reports that the number of home and E.E.C. (Common Market Countries) students are to be cut by 7.5 per cent over a four year period. This figure represents 20,000 places.

"Those lucky enough to get places will have far fewer courses to choose from, less choice regarding where to study, more crowded lectures, fewer services and facilities and less opportunity to

followed.

"Such discrimination has driven many foreign students away from British universities," Shanks says.

"Predictably the effect of the official policy has been to reduce the number of students coming from abroad (from Woolas), and many British universities have lost a significant proportion to their revenue (in addition to less

Many people blame the current cuts in Great Britain as a

to higher education and secondly to those subject areas deemed undesirable by the government such as arts and social services," he adds.

"This is especially serious in a time when Britain is subject to so many social tensions."

Matters are further complicated when it is reported that the projected cuts are not going to be balanced across all the British universities, but selectively given.

*Seven Universities will lose more than a quarter of their grant and between 14 per cent and 30*

matter," Shanks says.

"The universities which were hardest hit were hit undoubtedly as a result of political decisions," he adds. "This would seem obvious from the fact that cuts did not fall everywhere evenly."

When the British government is cutting post-secondary and social programs, an effort is being made to upgrade its weapons systems, including Trident nuclear missiles.

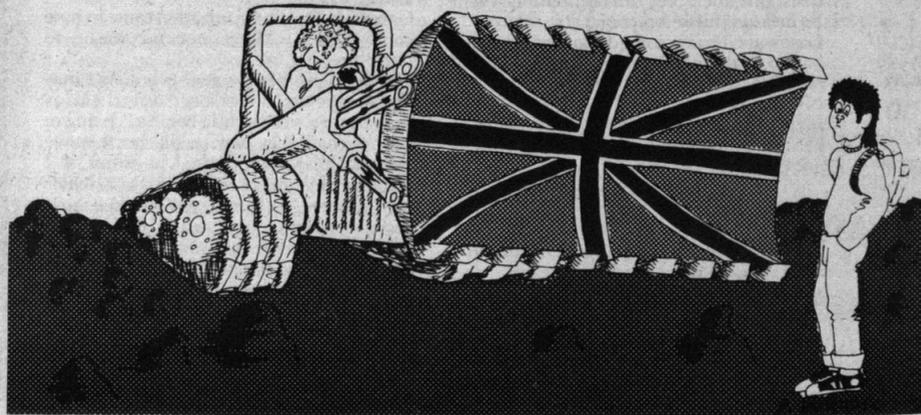
"I suspect that for a number of years, education has been a political pawn in Britain," says Shanks. "At a time of economic decline, we're told by the government that we cannot enjoy the provision of services we have enjoyed in the past. At the same time however the government has continued to maintain high levels of arms."

"Such expenditures on arms are quite consistent with the belligerent stance of the present government, but seems to be inconsistent with their economic views, which would seem to indicate cuts in all departments in all areas of government expenditures," he adds.

"The fact that the military has been favored and education has suffered serves to indicate once again the fact that the Tory government lacks a coherent policy for higher education."

Current program cuts in Britain cannot be compared to these occurring in Alberta, according to Shanks.

"I don't think there is one good parallel between higher education in Great Britain and higher education in Alberta," Shanks explains. "This being due to the fact that Alberta is economically very healthy whereas Britain has been undergoing for a number of years now, a process of economic decline and stagnation."



pursue research or take higher degrees when they graduate," Woolas tells Shanks. "The overall effect of the cuts is to drastically reduce educational provision both in terms of student places and the quality of teaching."

Access has already restricted the placement of foreign students, according to Shanks.

At Liverpool University in the 1980-81 session, Masters degree student fees were 1187£ (approximately \$2968). Overseas students paid anywhere from 2500£ (\$6250) to 6000£ (\$15,000) depending on the program

direct affect of its declining economy.

"The situation concerning government cutbacks in higher education (also assisted by inflationary erosion) has been deteriorating throughout the 1970s, but has been especially aggravated by the present government attitude to higher education and more generally adequate provision of social services," Shanks says.

"My guess is that government policy shows a deliberate attempt to restrict access. Firstly

per cent of their home and E.E.C. students. Four of those seven are former colleges of advance technology. They are Salford, Aston, Bradford and Surrey. (*The Times*, July 3/81)

*The Times* also says that some universities, such as Oxford, Cambridge, Kent, and the Manchester Institute of Science and Technology, will be affected relatively lightly.

"I think the reason that the present administration has hit education and social funding, not for instance military expenditures, is largely a political



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