

York students criticize government cutbacks

The following articles were written by York students concerned about government cutbacks in funding to provincial services and institutions. As always, readers are encouraged to respond.

By GORD GRAHAM

Sometimes governments contemplate or enact schemes so notorious they become catch-phrases that evoke fear and loathing from all who hear them mentioned.

The word "cutbacks" is one such phrase; and the name "Henderson Report", another.

For years the post-secondary institutions across Canada, particularly in Ontario, have faced severe financial constraints imposed by governments reluctant to pour more millions into what they see as the bottomless pit of institutional learning.

At York, these cutbacks have caused scrimping and forced ambitious plans to be shelved indefinitely. Although 75 per cent of York's budget is now spent on salaries, wages have fallen behind the cost of living and pay rates for comparable jobs outside the university.

Academic programmes have not been spared. Tutorial groups continue to increase and low enrolment courses are axed permanently. In 1970-71, York's libraries spent 41 per cent of their total budget on acquiring books. Last year, only 28 per cent went toward books, the rest of the budget swallowed by inflated costs for everything else.

The new era of cutbacks has forced the administration to decree that ancillary services turn a profit to make up for other hard-

hit areas. This policy has made many of the services on campus that students need much more expensive than ever before.

Residence costs were up 10 per cent this year, parking up 35-40 per cent, and even the price of books increased by as much as 25 per cent so the bookstore could generate more income.

Although part of these increases can be attributed to inflation, no increases would be needed if government funding levels rose sufficiently to offset inflation.

No one could say exactly how much food prices were raised this year, but many students on tight budgets would agree the increases were substantial enough to cut out their casual snacking on the campus.

Dale Ritch called these price hikes on student services, in effect, "a back-door tuition increase."

But if these hikes were sneaking in the back door, the Henderson Report was pounding down the front door and tearing up the yard with its recommendations of 65 per cent tuition boosts over the next three or four years.

This report was prepared for the Tories by former auditor general Maxwell Henderson, and its seventh chapter deals exclusively with post-secondary education.

Average Ontario tuition would be raised from \$588 to \$970 by Henderson's recommendation, and if inflation continues, tuition will be increased even more to offset it.

The whole aim is to reduce government spending on post-secondary education by \$80 million by 1978-79, and if tuition can't be raised to fill the gap, then staff must be laid off, 2,700 in all, to reduce the present student-to-faculty ratio from 13 to one to 16 to

one throughout Ontario.

Although the response to these suggestions in the press was not unfavourable, the student response was vehement, culminating in the January march on Queen's Park of at least 2,500 students from all over Ontario, unanimous in their condemnation of the report.

Many faculty members feel the recommendations are as threatening to them as they are to students.

Professor Jack Granatstein, chairman of York's faculty association, said "As with other parts of the university community, YUFA feels deep concern over the proposals advanced in the Henderson Report. To posit higher tuition fees as the only alternative to faculty cutbacks is cynical and untrue."

COU REPLIES

Meanwhile, the Council of Ontario Universities (COU) mulled over the proposals and struck its own sub-committee, which included York president Ian Macdonald, to study them and make counter-recommendations.

The COU report was released in January and quickly referred back to the sub-committee for more study. Among its recommendations were that "the level of tuition fees be allowed to increase during the next several years... and that government grants become independent of the level of fee income" to each institution.

The COU also agreed with Henderson that each university should be allowed to set its own fee structure, instead of the province setting fees as is now done.

The COU set 25 per cent as an



Thousands of students from across the province gathered at Queen's Park in mid-January to protest post-secondary education cutbacks.

"acceptable" level for tuition hikes. This would raise York's tuition from \$660 to \$825.

There was some opposition to these proposals within the COU, notably from Trent, thus the report was referred back to its originators for further work, a move that may have defused a potentially embarrassing split.

The level of funding for universities in 1976-77 was announced in December, 1975 as a global total of \$651 million, up 14.4 per cent from this year.

"GRATIFIED"

Dr. John B. Macdonald, then executive director of COU, issued

a statement at the time that said, in part, "The universities are gratified to learn that their needs... have this year obtained significant acknowledgment by government."

"Since an enrollment increase of 5.4 per cent is expected next fall, though, the increase in per student revenue will be only in the order of 7 per cent," said Macdonald. "This is not enough to cover the present rate of inflation."

Macdonald concluded, "The pattern of budget cutbacks which has affected all aspects of university operations in recent years will thus have to be continued."

Fare hike most visible cutbacks

By MARY LOCHHEAD

The same dollar that bought you four TTC tickets last year can now only purchase two and one half. That 60 per cent increase in one year is a direct result of the province's cutbacks programme.

Ontario usually subsidizes half the TTC deficit, but this year has reduced that portion, forcing the recent fare increase. The provincial government has limited its spending to a 5 per cent increase over last year's \$21.5 million, which leaves a considerable gap in covering the \$53 million dollar deficit.

Public transit is not merely a convenience for citizens, but is designed to reduce pollution and traffic congestion in the city. In order to abandon the convenience of the automobile, commuters must be offered a cheap and efficient alternative.

Those hardest hit by the fare increases are senior citizens,

students, and others with limited incomes who will find their mobility restricted by the higher cost. A shopping expedition, trip to the library, or to bookstores downtown is costly at \$1 for a roundtrip fare. Similarly, the reduction of senior citizen's tickets from eight to five for \$1 is no minor setback to those already living near poverty level on pensions.

The Movement for Municipal Reform is initiating action against the fare increase, as it is perhaps the most visible and widespread manifestation of the cutbacks in Metro. In an effort to have Metro Council reject the increase initiated by the TTC Commission (an appointed body), the Movement distributed 20,000 leaflets to TTC passengers last Monday.

According to Sara Powers, coordinator of the Movement for Municipal Reform, 15,000 copies of their petition against the fare in-

crease were received at City Hall by Wednesday.

These petitions, available across Metro (including the CYSF office at York), are one indication of the widespread dissatisfaction of citizens.

Despite these actions, and opposition of citizens at the Metro Council meeting, the elected representatives refused to roll back the increase and instead appointed a commission to do a financial study on the TTC.

A proposal to tax the corporations and merchants who benefit from public transit's daily supply of workers and shoppers was defeated.

It is obvious that fares cannot finance TTC operations. The option was left open to boroughs to levy a business surcharge. This is not likely to be implemented, as those same boroughs are trying to increase their share of the city's industry and commerce.

If Metro refused to tax the corporate giants in the downtown core, it is contradictory to expect the smaller businessmen in the boroughs to bear the cost.

Metro Council, caught in the squeeze between rising costs and reduced provincial subsidies, has not solved the problem of the transit deficit with a simple fare increase. Unless alternative funding is found, we face the prospect of the same gap and another increase next year.

Sara Powers has stated that, since council has refused to reconsider the increase, the only direction available is to confront the provincial government, the initiator of the cutbacks.

The Movement for Municipal Reform is organizing a demonstration at Queen's Park on March 9, which will provide citizens with an opportunity to directly voice their disapproval of the cutbacks.

The people have to fight cutbacks in social services

By GAEL SILZER

The Ontario provincial government has declared open war on the quality of life in this province. In order to reduce provincial spending they have embarked on a programme which seeks to destroy the social service sector which people in this province depend on.

Education, daycare, health services and so on, are losing the financial support they need to function. The vast majority of people in this province cannot afford to pay more for social services. They depend on the government to provide the necessary financial assistance; instead they are asked to stay home and take care of their own children, when no day care is available. It is taken to the extent that people are told that education is a privilege.

The people of this country have been taxed for many years and will continue to be so; however, corporations that are taxed minimally, if at all, continue to receive large sums of government aid. The government feels that it can afford to continue such projects as the continuation of Highway 400, the multi-million dollar funding of Syncrude, and yet tells its citizens that they must cutback in the area of social services — the only cure that can help us prevent the infestation of our society.

The Progressive Conservatives in this province have implemented their cutbacks programme through administrative decrees to the particular social service departments, without putting their

McKeough-Henderson report in front of the legislature for debate.

The Liberals object to the cutbacks in health care and yet they refuse to oppose this report.

The New Democratic Party is the only political party in Ontario which opposes the report and all its implications.



What can individuals do to oppose the cutbacks? In Metro, a group of people have come together to form the Coalition Against Cutbacks. Many of these groups have formed and are forming across the province to oppose the cutbacks in the social services. You can write to your local M.P.P. opposing the cutbacks, or start petitioning the government to reverse its new policy, which in all contexts is directed against working people — those less capable of defending themselves.

The labour congress has organized a demonstration for March 22 in Ottawa. The anti-cutbacks committee at York is organizing a moratorium later this month to discuss the effects the cutbacks will have on society in general. It is important that people get involved in fighting this proposal.

... sorry lady, the nearest hospital is about 350 miles away!...

