

## *"If a parent . . . is not interested in financing the education of his or her children . . ., I do not know why his or her neighbor should be expected to finance it"*

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In Ontario for example, university administrations met throughout last Christmas vacation to try to compromise with the Ontario government over its budgetary proposals for 1975-76. First and most popular amongst them is an increase in student tuition fees designed to shift the entire cost of inflation onto those least able to bear it, mainly lower income students.

In a January CUP release "students throughout the province face a future in which inflationary pressure on grants, diminished employment prospects, combined with residence fee increases and the spectre of tuition hikes, is causing all but the most financially secure post-secondary institutions to wonder whether increased sacrifices for a lower quality of education are worth it, even if they are possible." Many argue that students are a viable investment in the future, and in this light, what will happen to the quality and relevance of a university education if the trend continues?

Donald Bethune, head of the Ontario Student Awards Program (OSAP) has challenged press coverage of the Ontario government's handling of loans and grants and says that the financial assistance program is nothing more than welfare.

Bethune said that his own children went through post-secondary schooling without any financial assistance and they didn't live at home at the time although he paid their tuition. The comments were made in a telephone interview with the Asylum, the paper at Centennial College in Toronto.

Karolyn Kendrick, researcher for Ontario Federation of Students (OFS) said that "OSAP isn't a welfare scheme at all. Students are contributing members of society and it has always been our position that education is a necessity and a social right." She said that the government has been using the welfare posture to justify not giving students an increase in the cost of living allowance. The allowance is \$32 per week which is the same as New Brunswick's allowance.

The Ontario government in November announced that they would increase university funding in 1975-76 by 7.4 percent per student. All but one of Ontario's 16 universities have said that they face financial deficits next year.

OFS said February 12 that OSAP will not raise loan ceilings next year. They also say that the Ontario government will recommend to the provincial treasury board that living allowances go up from the present \$32 per week and that lessened parental contributions will be required next year.

OFS states that the federal government will raise the loan ceiling to \$1,800 but that Ontario's limit will remain the same.

According to a Canadian University Press report, if the student groups who claim that the government intends to make students pay the whole cost of their education through loans are right, then students are going to graduate in the future with a mammoth debt to repay.

Using Ontario as an example, estimates of the basic cost per student per year of \$2,100 and a living allowance totalling \$1,600 would force students in need

to borrow \$3,700 per year if tuition and related costs were raised to these levels as OFS claims. A student from a low income family who could not pay the money would have a debt of \$11,100 after a three year Bachelor of Arts program.

Ontario opposition leader Robert Nixon (Liberal) said that there should be no tuition fees at post-secondary levels, but he was unwilling to put this even on the level of an "election promise." The remark was made during an address to students at Ryerson Polytechnical Institute February 5, 1975.

In Quebec, according to Marial Lemay, director of the Quebec Student Loans and Bursaries Program (independent of CSLP) Quebec students will get more student aid next year and have less trouble getting it.

Lemay told an audience on the Loyola campus of Concordia University that the 1975-76 loan program would eliminate the use of parental contributions to students in calculating loans. He said that the government would not completely remove consideration of parents income in making loans and grants because lower and middle income families expect the rich to support their children's education.

A comprehensive education policy of the Alberta New Democratic Party was adopted at a pre-election convention in Calgary January 31. It calls for the abolition of student loans and their replacement with a grant system adequate to support post-secondary students through their period of studies.

To update this, Manitoba New Democratic Premier Ed Schreyer has taken a stand against increased student aid.

People want water treatment plants and other things, not a better financial deal for students, he told a press conference in Brandon, Manitoba.

He said the idea of eliminating or even lowering tuition fees was hard to justify as a government priority.

Schreyer also expressed a negative view of any changes in student view of any changes in student aid regulations which would make funds available to students whose parents refused to support their education.

"If a parent who has the means is not interested in financing the education of his or her children or ex-dependents, the I do not know why his or her neighbour should be expected to finance it" he said.

"Nothing in life is easy" he added.

Schreyer's less than sympathetic view of student aid runs counter to the official policy stance of the federal NDP, which supports making aid more available to students and an eventual elimination of tuition fees.

Bud Cowan, president of Memorial University (Newfoundland) Central Student Union (CSU) presented a brief on January 20 to the Newfoundland government asking that the maximum loan ceiling be lowered to \$450 from the present ceiling of \$1,400.

Byron Hender, University of British Columbia's administration financial aid officer said that the elimination of provincial government scholarships has freed cash for a 50 percent increase in loans and bursaries this year. He said cash that was spent on \$200 scholarships for the top 17 percent of students in the past is now being used for general bursaries.

Consistency in student aid programs across the country is virtually nonexistent with the exception of a few minor sections. Problems and solutions also vary depending on local variables affecting students.

Residence and tuition fees are rising across Canada so every province must tailor their individual programs to suit their needs.

Student opinion on the issue varies whether or not the loan structure is fair or not depending on the size of the loan they received, comparisons with other students, and other factors. Many students cry that they know someone who got more than they did.

Administrators desire to overhaul the system. Many disgruntled tax-payers will be more than happy to furnish details of abuse in the loan plan. A minimal amount of abuse will occur with any social assistance program, but something as vitally important as the issue of student loans should not be argued in this light.

## *'Federal support for aid might take a new direction'*

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dictates loan rather than grant assistance. He omitted reference to the other advantage of loans over grants—that loans are a cheap form of government aid compared with grants.

Faulkner did make reference to the current direction of federal thinking as far as setting tuition fees is concerned. "To the extent that federal support enables institutions to hold down tuition fees" he said "many relatively well-off students might be unjustifiably subsidized."

So social justice as defined not only means loans instead of grants for the vast majority, it also means increased tuition fees. Faulkner again declined comment on another aspect of this tenet of his theory of social justice—that increased tuition fees means the government can pass on a greater proportion of the cost of education to the individual student, thereby reducing the need for government operating assistance to institutions.

The recent discovery that a secret federal-provincial task force on student aid has been operating since last fall proves Faulkner to be a man of his word when he says his department is studying the "more broadly based concerns in the area of student loans." Co-chairman of the body in non other than R.J. Lachapelle, the director-general of Faulkner's Education Support Branch.

The terms of reference for the task force, as agreed to be the federal government and the Council of Education Ministers of the Provinces, are expansive:

"To give immediate consideration to those changes necessary in existing federal plans for student assistance in order to bring them into line with existing needs and educational patterns."

They will also examine and recommend "possibilities of coordinating and/or rationalizing" the CSLP with manpower training allowances, the occupational training program and other related income maintenance manpower training schemes.

The minutes of the November meeting of this group

show that one of the first items was the presentation of Faulkner's speech.

"There was some indication that the federal thing regarding support for post-secondary education, including student aid, might take a new direction as mentioned in the Secretary of State's address."

The membership of this federal-provincial task force consists exclusively of student aid bureaucrats. They are to continue to meet in closed session, releasing no information, until August 1975.

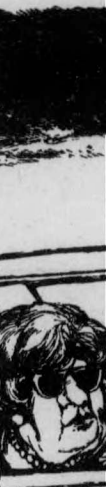
At that time they will deliver a report in closed session to the Council of Education Ministers. It is safe to presume that the report will likely be the outline of a coordinated federal-provincial master plan for student aid policy changes.

It is also safe to presume the final results of the long months of discussions will be a recommendation to move toward the eventual elimination of student grants except for those who can qualify for welfare; increasing tuition fees to reduce operating deficits and the need for government funding; and increasing the amount of money a student will be able to borrow to pay for a college or university education.

Many students believe that massive changes in thinking on the funding of post-secondary education are taking place. But because of the secretiveness that surrounds all the federal decision-making bodies involved in student aid, they are left to draw their own conclusions from innuendo, hints, leaked documents, and analysis of patterns of past thinking.

But many student groups conclude that things are going to get worse for the individual student in the immediate future. The frustration lies in the fact that even an organized opposition will have a difficult time pressing for a reformed student aid program when no government body will admit its powers and real involvement in the program.

Since there are no legitimate channels open to interested groups to add their input into decision making, political action has to be broadened to include a greater public support group. This should especially involve parents, high school students and anyone who will be affected by the changes in the future.



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