

Uncertainty for engineer grads

by Mark Olyan

According to the new Dean of Engineering, Dr. Frederick Otto, "It's tough to arrive at any exact figures," regarding the chance a graduate of his faculty has of gaining permanent employment.

"Of the fourth year class which will graduate in the spring, 17 per cent are currently placed," said Otto. "Last year, at graduation time, 20-25 percent (of the 1984 graduates) had positions. By fall, the average placement was approximately 50 per cent."

As far as career opportunities are concerned, Otto felt the best area was in computer engineering, where students stand a somewhat better chance of finding jobs.

When contacted at Canada Employment, Margaret Sinclair said, "I wouldn't dream of speculating (on the prospects for engineering graduates)."

Sinclair, when asked for employment statistics from last year, answered, "It's not fair to quote (those statistics). Times have changed and the labour market is different now. My information comes from what different graduates have said."

Sinclair added that Canada Employment surveys are not always "responded to accurately."

Computing and Mechanical Engineering were singled out by Sinclair as the branches with the best prospects for finding jobs.

"Electrical is not (a terrific area) and Civil is the worst, because the way the labour force is, there is no building... construction is down and there is no development."

Dr. M. Faulkner, Chairman of Mechanical Engineering, said, "engineering is definitely not the same as the heydays of the 1970s, but it's certainly better than one year ago; that is, a higher percentage of graduates are being placed."

Faulkner had nothing but good things to report on today's engineering students.

"Students are becoming more aggressive in looking for jobs, and I think that's reasonable. They spend more time on bettering themselves. They used to have to wait until a job came open, now they're trying to make themselves different—in background and experience. They are striving to be different."

Chairman of Mineral Engineering, Professor M. Plitt, said "engineering is not as good as five years ago—not anywhere near as good, but it's better than three years ago. I don't have any precise statistics—we don't know who does or doesn't have jobs. Sometimes, I've asked for a show of hands of who has jobs in class."

Plitt explained that Mineral Engineering really has four sub-branches: Petroleum, Metallurgical, Mining and Mineral Process Engineering, with Petroleum Engineering being the best area in which to gain employment. "Things are picking up there much faster: the oil com-

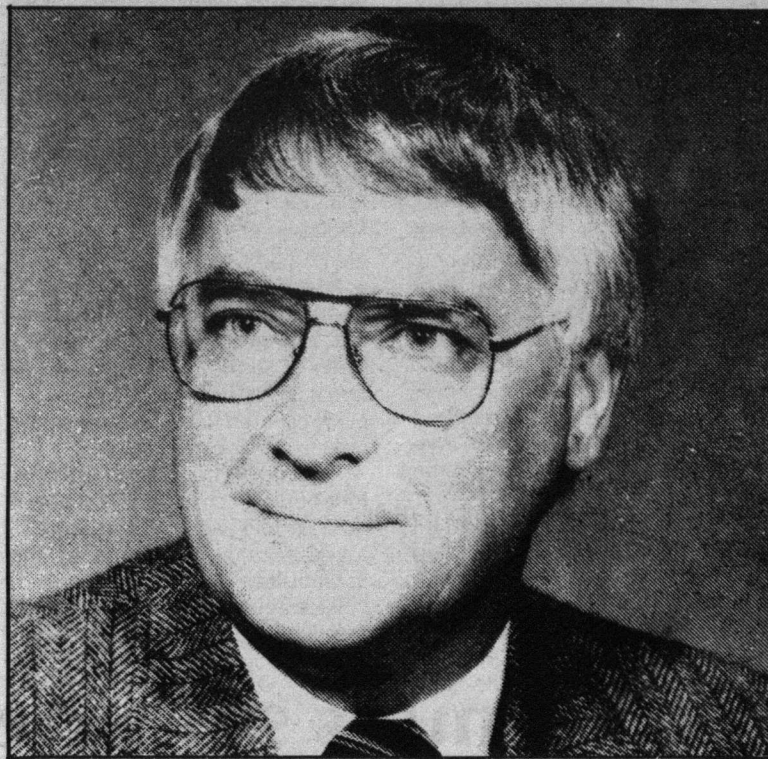
panies look good—things are upbeat."

In contrast, Plitt said "base metals are in the doldrums right now; many mines have shut down."

The National Energy Policy, said Plitt, "has directly hurt petroleum (engineers). The profitability level, that is the tax on operation that comes off the top—that money is gone, siphoned off by the government. Of course, the new government hasn't taken it (the tax) off. Hopefully, it will be taken off. The province seems to be taking the incentive and charging ahead."

For people who are thinking of studying engineering, Plitt advised, "the long term prospects remain good, what with the oil sands projects on the horizon and the coal industry levelling off and perhaps going on the upsurge by the 1990's."

"In four years time," said Plitt, "things might be at a healthy stage—companies will again be short of engineers and may have to bring them in from other provinces and import some from other countries."



Dr. Frederick Otto, Dean of Engineering

Federal job creation money delayed

OTTAWA(CUP) — There are still no application forms available anywhere in the country for Challenge '85 student summer job creation program, announced by the Conservative government more than a month ago.

The government wants to give out \$205 million, mainly to employers as a subsidy or grant to hire students for summer jobs, but has been slow in organizing the program partly because of an attempt to "harmonise" job-creation with the provinces.

Federal bureaucrats in Ottawa said because the program is new, it

has taken much more time to set up, and will not be organized by the time students get out of school.

"It seems unlikely things will be in place by mid-April," said Allan Lennon, national co-ordinator of the employment and immigration union's campaign against cutbacks in the ministry.

Under the program, employers have to obtain applications through their local employment development branch and ask the federal government to give them money to hire students for the summer.

Lennon said the application forms are not ready because the

federal and provincial governments are having problems agreeing on the forms' content. To make up for the delay, Flora MacDonald, employment and immigration minister, announced new deadlines for applications: Mar. 29 in B.C., Manitoba, the Northwest Territories and Ontario and Mar. 22 in all other provinces.

NDP MP Howard McCurdy said the new deadlines mean the distribution of money will be hopelessly delayed.

"The minister has sounded the death-knell by moving the application deadline back to the end of March, just three weeks before thousands of students become actively unemployed," McCurdy told the House of Commons Mar. 6.

Brian MacDonald, a project officer in the employment ministry, admitted in an interview that "human beings being what they are, they will wait until the last possible date to send in their applications."

"Ninety or 95 per cent of the

applications will come in the last few days," MacDonald said.

Lennon said the employment ministry claims it can turn around an application — assess it and grant or refuse money — in 48 hours.

"But two years ago (the ministry) also said 48 hours and it took eight weeks to four months," Lennon said.

MacDonald said the process will be quicker this year because applications will be handled by regional offices unless they involve four or more people.

Still, Lennon said, "You've got to assess it. Is this a worthwhile endeavor?"

"Challenge '85 has been a bureaucratic botch by the government from the beginning," Lennon said.

"When the government does approve the funding for corporations' requests to hire students, students can apply for the jobs through Canada Employment centres for Students. But employment officials have said it will be mid-July before all the applications are processed.

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Rm 282 SUB at 12:30 p.m.

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Deadline for submission of application for grants is April 12, 1985. Early submission is advised. All applications are reviewed upon receipt by the Grants Advisory Committee. Applicants will be notified as to the Board of Trustees' decision by June 1, 1985. Research projects should be planned to start after this date.

Please address all inquiries and correspondence to:

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