

First in the West

Now Right Here in Nova Scotia

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In 1977 Alberta and Ontario began charging higher tuition to foreign students. In 1978 Quebec followed suit. And now in 1979 the governments of the Maritime provinces are considering doing the same.

Foreign students are still welcomed in Canada but as a "strain" to the country's economy they are being forced to pay more than Canadian students.

Harry Parrott, then-minister of Colleges and Universities in Ontario, said "mounting public concern regarding cost to taxpayers of educating foreign students" was the chief reason for differential fees in his province. 40.4% of all Canada's foreign students are in Ontario. Foreign students are now being charged 1½ times more than Canadians.

In Alberta, where there are 8% of the country's foreign students, an additional fee of \$300 is charged at universities and \$150 at colleges. According to the Minister of Advanced Education and Manpower, "this fee differential is visible recognition of the efforts of generations of Canadians and Albertans who have contributed to our quality system of education."

Between 1973 and 1976 the number of foreign students in Canada increased from 30,000 to nearly 56,000 but later declined to 53,000 in 1977. The highest percentage of these students come from Hong Kong followed by the United States.

In 1977 there were 1,463 foreign students in Nova Scotia, 454 in New Brunswick and 62 in Prince Edward Island. This constituted 6.9% of all foreign students in the country.

In Newfoundland, where there is still no talk of differential fees, there are 81 foreign undergraduates and 100 grads at the province's main institution.

Faculty and support staff wages make up 80% of the costs of operating a university. According to a study by the Canadian Bureau of International Education (CBIE), "it is very unlikely that the small number of foreign students could cause any substantial increase in these costs. There would be marginal costs in processing and orienting these students."

The CBIE has also said "since the amount by which fees have been increased does not nearly match the amount it costs to educate a student, differential fees do not meet the objective of removing the burden of educational cost of foreign students from the Canadian taxpayer."

"The expenditures of money by the Canadian taxpayer, through grants to institutions, is roughly equal to the amount of money imported into Canada by incoming students. This foreign student money would not otherwise find its way into the economy. On this basis alone, foreign students pay for themselves. Why should the country expect to make money off of foreign students?"

Students from abroad are not responsible for the economic and monetary policies which produce unemployment. Due to Canada's immigration policy they cannot work in the country unless it is an integral part of their studies. Foreign students must show proof of acceptance at an institution and resources to finance their studies before getting a visa and they must return to their home when it expires.

The fear in the Atlantic appears to be that since differential fees are in effect in other provinces, there will be an influx of students to the Maritimes. This, however, does not appear to be happening since at many

Ontario institutions the foreign student enrollment is stable.

According to the CBIE there are three favorite arguments used by governments when justifying differential fees: The Canadian taxpayer should not be required to subsidize the children of the wealthy in the rest of the world; foreign students are taking places that should go to Canadians; and other countries are charging differential fees so we should as well.

The CBIE goes on to counter all these arguments.

They feel Canada should be more concerned about its image abroad. Future foreign relations could suffer if foreign students, as future leaders of their countries, become bitter towards Canada. The country's economic and political interests would be better served by treating foreign students equally.

Canada has a debt to repay from the time when more Canadian students studied abroad. In the sixties nearly 16,000 Canadians were studying in other countries.

Only the United States and the United Kingdom charge differential fees. And in the U.S. they are charged to all out-of-state students, as well as out-of country.

The CBIE is also worried that Canada is closing its doors to Third World students. "Affluence should not be a criteria for the selection of foreign students any more than it is for the selection of Canadians."

Despite popular beliefs, foreign students are not taking the places of Canadian students. In faculties where there is great demand for entrance, such as medicine, there are quotas which give preference to Canadian students.

Although in many cases the number of foreign students is not decreasing because of differential fees, it is accepted that lower income students are still not entering the country to study. At the recent CBIE conference it was said that "poor foreign students never came to the country anyway, and now differential fees will be a further barrier."

"Differential fees discriminate in favour of the wealthier inhabitants of foreign coun-

tries, thus making a mockery of Canada's claims for equal educational opportunity," says one CBIE.

Administrators of Atlantic institutions have spoken publicly against differential fees. Dalhousie president Henry Hicks in January said Canada has a debt to repay for foreign countries' services to Canada. Other administrators also have spoken of the cultural enrichment foreign students bring to the Maritimes' campuses.

Due to the small number of foreign students in this area the universities did not consider the situation necessary for differential fees. Increased fees from these students would only be a "drop in the bucket", according to most administrators.

In the April 1977 three-year plan of the Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission, it voiced concern that because of differential fees in the rest of the country too many students would move to the Maritimes. The commission said a formal foreign student policy might be needed and that it would "continue to monitor" the situation. At that time, foreign students represented 3.2% of the undergraduate student body in the Maritimes and 18% of graduate students.

The large increase they spoke of has yet to show. At Dalhousie this year there are 564 foreign students, about 25 more than last year.

When differential fees were first initiated by the Ontario government, both Trent and McMaster Universities refused to implement them. They, however, eventually gave in to government pressure and went along with the provincial policy.

Student organizations across the country are opposed to differential fees, saying that they are discriminatory.

In Edmonton this summer, the Federation of Alberta Students held a press conference prior to the Commonwealth Games. "You open your doors to the world's athletes but close them to the world's students" they told the government.

Quebec students protesting the increased fees in their province pointed out that the foreign students are unable to organize themselves because of possible repressive actions taken against them under Canada's new immigration law, Bill C-22.

The Ontario Federation of Students had filed a grievance to the Human Rights Commission. But the Commission handed down a decision last June which said that differential fees do not contravene the human rights legislation because they do not discriminate on the basis of nationality or place of origin—Canadian citizens born abroad and landed immigrants are not required to pay the higher fees.

The battle has been lost for now in other provinces but it has only begun in the East. The new immigration bill and the attempt to take away foreign students' rights to teaching assistantships are indicative of the government's attitude towards international students.

Last year in Nova Scotia a new law was made preventing foreign students from coverage under the Medical Services Insurance. Exceptions for visa students were eventually agreed to, but these were hardly adequate for foreign students in this province.

The former Liberal government and the present Conservative government in Nova Scotia have spoken of the value of international students on the province's campuses, as have the governments of the other Maritime Provinces.

In the near future students will find out if the governments' actions will support such beliefs.

