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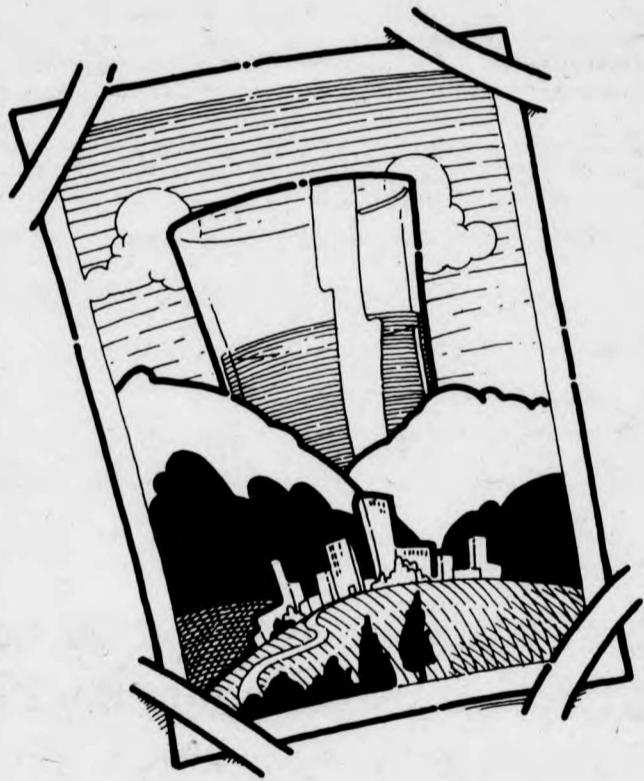
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Student presidents ask York not to withdraw from OFS

By MARY MARRONE

Spokespeople and supporters of the Ontario Federation of Students (OFS) spoke about the benefits York students would have if they remained in the student lobbying organization last Tuesday.

Murray Miskin, chairperson for the OFS and a panel of student union presidents including Shirley French from U of T, Philip Moore from MacMaster and Molly Pellecchia from Humber College said that OFS is needed to lobby for students' demands in the province and on a national level.

They told their audience in the Bear Pit the pressure which OFS put on government resulted in the creation of a summer job programme because of their unemployment survey carried out last summer which showed a 25 per cent unemployment rate among students. He also said that OFS pressure caused the government to moderate their cutbacks. "Without organized opposition to the tuition increase, it could have been \$200. And it wouldn't have been announced that there would be no increase for next year," said Moore.

Pellecchia pointed out the need for councils to act as a service organization but also in a political role for student representation, a more important but less visible function. Admitting that OFS has problems, she also indicated that "if you don't work with them, you don't have any representation at all". According to Pellecchia, this role has become increasingly important "with student unemployment, the deteriorating quality of education, and a student aid programme that is almost useless".

French expressed her concern over the fact that OFS will weaken its position if York pulls out, since "the more members we have the stronger we are". She called the

referendum an irresponsible move on the part of CYSF and claimed they did not make an effort to make their views heard to the OFS.

"Edson has not seen fit to keep his responsibility. He came and sat on the sidelines and grumbled," said French.

A great deal of the blame for the concern raised about OFS was laid on CYSF. Miskin blamed the lack of OFS visibility on the Edson council. "It is the job of the CYSF to attend meetings and give input. CYSF is responsible for bringing back the message of what OFS is doing. CYSF has failed." He cited several examples of "failure".

A bundle of postcards for the "Postcard to Parrott" campaign were allegedly thrown in the garbage and a second bundle "mysteriously disappeared". In last year's unemployment survey York submitted the largest number of forms, but, according to Miskin, upon analysis it was discovered that "at least 90 per cent of the surveys from York were fraudulent. Several hundred of them were filled out by the same student." The lack of success of National Student Day and February 10 was also blamed on CYSF. "It seemed to us that CYSF designed them for the purpose of failing," added Miskin.

During the question period, Paul Hayden, CYSF executive member and presidential candidate gave some reasons for withdrawing from OFS. According to Hayden, at an OFS conference last summer, Edson suggested a media campaign and "the plenary called it Madison Ave. and laughed at it. That's why Barry got upset". He said that CYSF needed the money. He also said that OFS should lobby the unions, citing an example where a union objected to students being hired, when Terry Jones PC (Youth Secretariat) had arranged it with

the company involved.

Tom Diotte, a CYSF presidential candidate, asked why 65 per cent of their budget is on staff salaries. Moore responded by saying a student organization had to be labour intensive for lobbying and research. He said that the research staff included "highly skilled professionals" having Master's degrees.

Moore said, "If \$11,000 is too much, well, I disagree. I don't do work which I expect from the staff. I expect a lot from them and I get a lot from them". He also mentioned that they work 50 to 60 hours a week and have to travel across the province.

CYSF's decision was defended by Stan White, external affairs vice-president for CYSF saying that "We can strengthen our council with money now going to OFS-NUS". He then criticized Miskin for not better representing OFS on the York campus, accusing him of not showing much interest. White also blamed Excalibur for not cooperating with CYSF in reaching the students.

Miskin responded that he was not a member of CYSF but was a member of Osgoode, who is holding a referendum March 23 to determine whether Osgoode should join OFS.

Support from the audience came from Alice Klein, ULS presidential candidate who said that OFS is "the only voice students have to demonstrate to the provincial government our opposition to the fee increase, unemployment, and the cutbacks.

Naomi Laird, member of Bethune College Council, also commended OFS. "OFS has proved itself enough on a provincial basis. CYSF has not proved itself on this campus. We have proof enough of what OFS can do."

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