

Ignoring underfunding leads to inferior plumbing

By JAMES FLAGAL

"If it's not a major inconvenience, why bother making such a big fuss over getting it fixed?" That's what my friend Alan asked me after emptying out the pail under his slightly leaking sink. He was trying to rationalize why he had paid so few visits to his landlord to get his leaking pipe repaired. "It takes too much time to chase after the landlord," complained Alan, and as most Toronto tenants can tell you, it takes months to get landlords to repair anything.

However Alan had been forewarned about the periodic leaky pipe by the previous tenant. Unfortunately, the landlord had only repaired the pipe with patch-work leaving the old pipe to form yet another bothersome leak.

"Why not demand a brand new pipe?" I inquired, but Alan shook his head in response, "it takes enough effort just to get the guy here and do the needed patchwork, a new pipe would take public demonstrations 24 hours a day outside his door. Anyhow I just have to empty the pail every two days, and when it gets really bad, I usually increase the frequency of visits to the landlord, until he finally does the work which cures the leakage for a while."

I was in my political studies class the other day while my professor was explaining about the day of protest on October 16. When he asked us how we felt about it, one student replied "Why are we having it in the first place; is it really going to do much good?"

Whether the topic is leaking pipes and lazy landlords, or a university protest day concerning underfunding, the problem is the same. To what point must a person be convinced that unless s/he takes action, the situation will only get worse?

Think about it: overcrowded

classrooms (my law and society class from last year saw over 40 people lining the stairs and walls until mid-October) increasing university costs, deteriorating classrooms, research and library equipment. I think we all found out that the simple course change has become almost a full day affair which creates a situation filled with the virtue of patience.

Yes, it is happening before your eyes. The trivial inconveniences you deal with daily are slowly increasing as the quality of post secondary education decays and underfunding takes its toll. Perhaps we all believe that overcrowding and obsolete equipment are simply a natural symptom associated with any university education. Perhaps we also believe that irritating leaky faucets are natural flaws found in every apartment one rents.

If we ignore the underfunding situation for much longer, then these adverse conditions will become manifest in the university system. So why do we consistently accept short-term solutions to problems which deeply deserve comprehensive long-term solutions?

If we don't watch it our universities will become obsolete in preparing students for the ever increasing challenges of a rapidly advancing technological society. The patchwork solutions offered by politicians will never rectify the underfunding problem, but they do achieve the intended goal of satisfying the voters. For that matter, how much political accommodation do voters need on the post-secondary issue?

I don't think Alan really understood the consequences of only getting the pipe patched up (that sooner or later he would be left without the use of a kitchen sink). I don't think students and the population at large understand the magnitude of neglect post secondary education has endured in this province over the past

decade, and the ramifications of this dilemma on society as a whole. What would happen if our universities really fell behind that coveted 'second to none' position?

The senior citizens last year mobilized enough support to make everyone realize the travesty of deindexing pensions. They made everyone believe "Wow I'd better voice my concern over the government proposed action, because I'll be old one day and require a certain amount of pension for myself." The senior citizens created enough political will to dissuade Ottawa from passing deindexing legislation.

So why have universities been so ineffective in mobilizing public opinion to their cause?

An aide to Gregory Sorbara, minister of universities and colleges, told a York delegation visiting the minister's office last year. "Universities need a higher profile in order to get a bigger slice of the budgetary pie. Otherwise the funds will be extracted from the post secondary's purse and placed in another policy area unless public opinion is mobilized."

Effective lobbying for underfunding cannot start without the student's awareness and involvement. Why not be sensitive in the coming election to see which party endorses a more advantageous platform for university welfare.

York has its own difficulties: it's the second most overcrowded university in Ontario and due to a funding formula which discriminates against institutions which increase enrolment (in the past decade York has increased from 24,000 to 40,000 students) York has been comparatively underfunded when compared to other universities in Ontario. For York's sake the funding formula must be changed: for everyone's sake university grants must be dramatically increased.

Unfortunately the underfunding

issue is far more complex than leaky pipes. However the thinking to stimulate political will is quite similar. Do you want to live with leaky pipes and possibly a non-functioning kitchen sink? What kind of universities do you want to send your children to and how much are you willing to

pay? Underfunding really does affect everyone, just like leaky pipes. So we had better replace the Ontario universities' pipeline before it becomes obsolete.

James Flagal is a news editor for Excalibur.

Student federation 'worth it' for Ontario students: Certosimo

cont'd from p. 5

puses and students in order to develop a sense of being a part of this provincial-wide education system, and therefore a part of this federation. We are also working on a new alcohol awareness program with the breweries which will be a peer-oriented display and complex computer program which will help students recognize their drinking problems. This is all a part of the chairperson's responsibility to develop this profile for the organization so the student on the campus feels a certain pride in this province-wide effort.

EXCALIBUR: Do you really think that students are getting their three dollars worth with respect to political lobbying, because the government may give out more money, but there's no saying that there's a definite organization responsible for that decision?

CERTOSIMO: In politics, you're right. There isn't always tangible proof that a decision is made because of a particular interest group. It can be for a series of reasons why a politician makes a certain decision. But there have been examples over the

years that OFS has been specifically responsible for. In 1974, when the Progressive Conservative government moved to get rid of the campus pubs, it was a province-wide campaign that was run that prevented that bill from going through. And as a result 10 years later, we have campus pubs. The canteen license was the compromise because the hotel/motel association was trying to get rid of the special occasion permits for campuses, for they felt that instead of the students going to the bars in the area, they were staying on campus for the events.

Also, years ago there used to be a tax on food that you bought in residence (ie. the meal plans). Larry Grossman, treasurer at the time, took off the tax and stated specifically it was because of a meeting he had with OFS. We did have an impact working together.

Now, to answer your question directly, I'd have to say yes, I think the three dollars is worth it for students. Definitely over the past fifteen years the kind of impact students have had on the education system and student life makes that three dollars worthwhile.

6.50/hr. to 9.66/hr.
plus benefits

PART TIME

Applications Accepted
on campus

S301 Ross
Monday, October 20
5:00 p.m.-8:00 p.m.

NOW PLAYING
Tues.-Sat. 8 p.m.
Sun. 7 p.m.

REVEEN THE IMPOSSIBLIST

Presents the World's Funniest
and most amazing stage show

MUSIC HALL THEATRE
147 Danforth Ave., Toronto
Half Block East of Broadview Station

Tickets now at
Theatre 469-5434
or all BASS outlets



The Leonard Wolinsky Lectures on
Jewish Life and Education at
York University 1986-87

THE FUTURE OF THE JEWISH DIASPORA: THE SOVIET UNION AND NORTH AMERICA

ANATOLY KHAZANOV
Hebrew University, Jerusalem and formerly
with the Academy of Science, Moscow

Disappearing Jewish and Other Minorities in
Soviet Russia Today: Krymchaks, Mountain
Jews, Tatars, and Lakhloukhim

WEDNESDAY, OCT. 22 at 4 P.M.
203 Founders College, York campus, Keele St. at Steeles Ave. W.

Religious, Cultural, and Language Revivals
Among Jews in Soviet Russia Today

WEDNESDAY, OCT. 22 at 8:15 P.M.
Shaarei Shomayim Congregation, 470 Glencairn Ave., Toronto

All lectures are open to the public. Admissions is free.
For further information, call (416) 736-5344.

Sponsored by York University's Faculty of Arts, Programme in
Religious Studies, and Faculty of Education, Judaic Studies Option,
in cooperation with the Toronto Board of Jewish Education.