

Ontario...

Students fight fee increase

TORONTO (CUP) -- About 50 Ontario student leaders bearing petitions with 25,000 signatures opposing a recent tuition hike were told by the provincial minister of colleges and universities he would not change his mind about instituting the hike next year.

Harry Parrott told the student union representatives at a Dec. 10 meeting he called, that even five million signatures would not pressure his government into rescinding the \$100-a-year hike for universities and \$75-a-year hike for community colleges effective in 1977-78.

As a result the student leaders mandated the executive of their provincial organization, the Ontario Federation of Students (OFS) to produce a province-wide strategy to fight the hike in the new year. A special plenary will vote on the executive recommendations in the near future.

According to OFS information officer Allan Golombek, the executive will propose a half-day moratorium on classes set for sometime in March.

The province-wide petition campaign was set just two weeks prior to the meeting with Parrott, at an emergency meeting of student representatives Nov. 27, two days after Parrott announced the tuition hike.

Petitions have already been circulated on the campuses of Cambrian College in Sudbury on the day of Parrott's announcement, and the following day at the University of Ottawa, collecting 500 and 2000 signatures respectively.

The text of the petition, struck at the plenary, attacked the hike on the grounds that it would not

improve the quality of education in the province or lessen the decreased funding Ontario's colleges and universities receive yearly, but

for the creation of a government summer employment program and a lowering of the \$1000 loan ceiling in the province's student aid

Parrott refused to answer many questions on the technicality that they were asked by the wrong party, since he had set two meetings, one for community college representatives in the morning to be followed by one with university student reps. The students ignored Parrott's restrictions and attended each other's meetings, although the minister would only acknowledge questions relating to the subject at hand in each of the two meetings.

Parrott told the community college representatives their increased tuition fees would up college revenue by between \$4 and \$5 million, but in response to a question said he could not guarantee if operating grants to colleges would not decrease because of the increased revenue.

When asked how Ontario's tuition could be justifiably increased, the minister said that individuals must bear some of the costs of their education. He admitted that the whole population benefited from the post-secondary education system, but said the 10 per cent of the provinces resources that is spent on post-secondary education goes to only 3 per cent of the population.

He dismissed claims that the hike would bar some students from attending college or university, saying that there were grants for needy students and that the loan scheme guaranteed assistance to all who needed it.

He also claimed that increased tuition ensured the quality of education, but refused to answer a question for National Union of Students fieldworker Gavin Anderson on whether Parrott considered the college systems of New Brunswick and Quebec, which have no fees, inferior to Ontario's.

Representatives at both meetings challenged Parrott's rationale for calling the meetings after the tuition hikes had been announced, and not before.

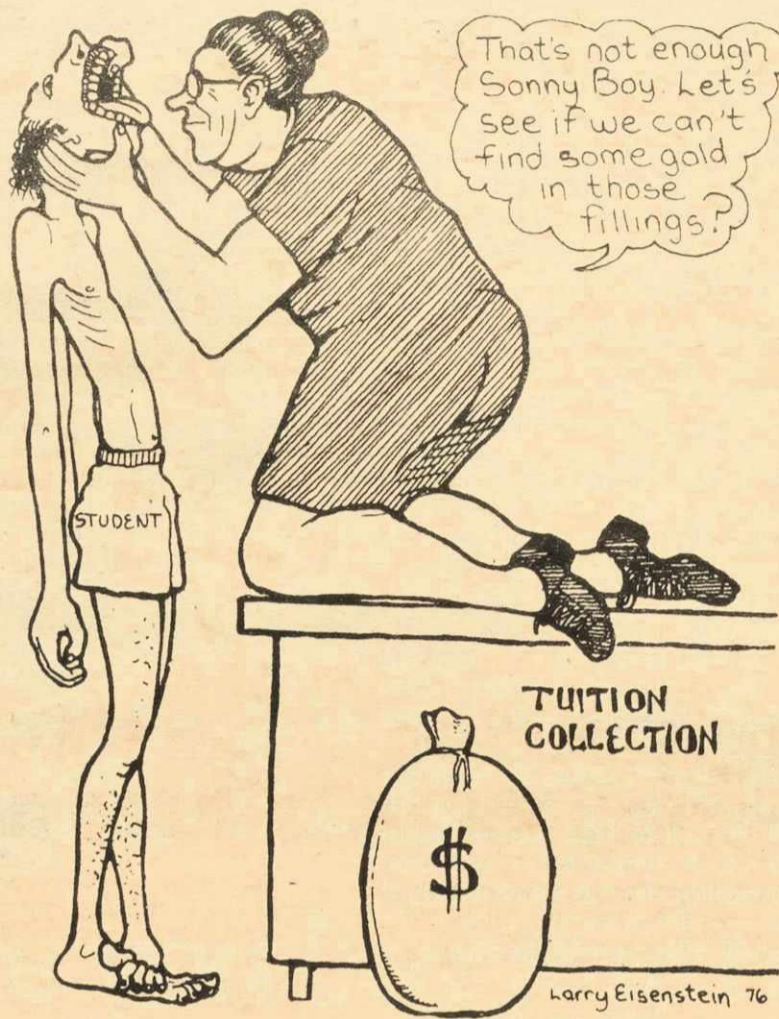
He admitted at the universities meeting that he had no intention of responding to student protests over the hike, despite the large number of students opposed to it.

Strategy for fighting the tuition fee hike in the future will involve a two-month campaign culminating in a moratorium on classes for half a day, likely sometime in March, according to OFS' Golombek. In doing so, students will be seeking support from outside the education community, for such groups as the Ontario Federation of Labor, the teachers' federation, high schools and boards of education, he said.

The distribution of "information kits" and meetings with "media people" will be used to draw attention to the students' position on the fee hikes, said Golombek.

He also said the late date for holding the moratorium, in the last month of the academic year, was necessary because of the time it would take to build up support.

In the meantime, the petition campaign will continue, with the aim of gathering more signatures for the community, he said.



would only act as a barrier to post-secondary education for many students.

Additionally, the petition called

program (OSAP).

An OFS research paper presented at the plenary stated the fee hikes were intended to make students pay the difference between needs and funding for post-secondary education over the past two years. (During this period the increases in government funding has declined, with only a 7.98 per cent increase for 1977-78, as compared to a 14 per cent increase for 1976-77 and a 16.9 per cent increase for 1975-76. University administrations have claimed the reduced increases actually mean a decrease in operating grants, since inflation has run in excess of the increases.)

The petition gathered about 25,000 signatures in the two week period between the emergency plenary and the meeting with Parrott Dec. 10.

But at the meeting Parrott told the student representatives he had hoped to talk about other things than the tuition hike.

Parrott told University of Toronto student president Shirley French he would not consider the petition, and when asked by members of the assembly if he would reconsider the hike if one million, two million or five million signatures were presented, he repeated, "No, no, no."

When asked by an OFS representative why colleges fees were increased by a greater percentage than universities (30 per cent as opposed to 16.6 per cent, according to OFS estimates), Parrott said he did not know why fees were set as they were.

Students to vote

Dalhousie students will be voting next month in a referendum for the Atlantic Federation of Students/Federation des Etudiants Atlantique (AFS/FEA).

Students will be deciding upon membership in AFS/FEA as based on the accountability of the organization.

AFS/FEA is an organization of post-secondary students in all four of the Atlantic provinces. It was formed in late 1974, but was hampered from the outset by structural and political problems. The latter were finally ironed out but delegates at the fall conference in Sackville, N.B. decided that the structure had to be changed before the organization could be truly effective.

The new fee structure of \$1 per student will facilitate greater com-

munication amongst Atlantic students and their local unions.

The increased revenue will also mean increased services. More research into financing, student aid, and unemployment, to name but a few of the important areas of concern, will enable student leaders to make more reasoned and sound presentations to governments. As well, expertise in such areas as course evaluations and course unions will be made available to each campus.

The whole idea behind the federation is to join students together to work on common concerns. It will also enable a united and strong student voice to be presented to the various governments, thus preventing the continuation of the governments' divide and conquer tactics.

Publishing delayed

by Trish Aikens

Attempts to publish a women's newspaper for the province, or at least for the metro area, have been hampered by financial difficulties—namely, a lack of money. The newspaper, christened **FORUM**, was initially supposed to appear on the stands sometime last year, but the paper's organizer, Brenda Bryan, has been unable to get the project off the ground due to a shortage of funds. However, the Provincial Government is currently undertaking a feasibility study of the potential of a women's newspaper for the area and also of the costs such a paper would incur.

The purpose of such a women's newspaper would be to provide

information for and about women. For example, the problems of day-care centres, the difficulties facing nurses as regards to the job market and other such issues of general interest and concern.

Bryan is finding her task quite frustrating however, because apart from a lack of funds, there also seems to be a lack of support for the paper. The reason for this is that there does not seem to be much of a women's movement in the province or in the immediate Halifax-Dartmouth area. Bryan is not prepared to give up, though and hopes that the paper will become a reality sometime in the not too distant future.

Late flash

Henry Hicks told the NSCAD Board of Governors, Wednesday, that he could not rule out a tuition increase for Dalhousie.

Details next week.