

TTC statistics criticized by Ellies

By GARY SYMONS

A TTC study on the feasibility of reducing transit fares for students by 50 percent is using "erroneous figures," charged CYSF Director of Finance Valance Ellies on Monday.

Ellies, York's representative on the Half-Price Metro Pass Coalition, formed late last year under the tutelage of Ward Six Alderman Jack Layton, cited two major inaccuracies in the study that he felt would prejudice the TTC against implementing the half-price fare.

The first mistake, Ellies said, was that the study's authors estimated that ridership in the student sector is already very high, possibly as high as 83 percent, and greater levels of ridership could not be expected to offset the cost of implementing the program.

Ellies said that when he challenged that figure, asking what age group had been used in the survey, he found the figures were based on a group between the ages of 15 and 25.

"I hardly think 15, 16, 17 and 18 year olds qualify as university students, Ellies said. "If you're just using university age students, that figure should be more like 65 percent." Drivers, those living close enough to walk to campus, and students who live on campus account for approximately 35 percent of the population of York, Ellies said, adding, "I would think even more; that's just a low estimate."

Also, Ellies says, the TTC figures do not take account of the possibility of increased ridership on the weekends with a reduced fare.

Ellies said he suggested a compromise reduc-

tion of 25 percent, which, combined with a 25 percent increase in ridership by students, would result in the TTC breaking even.

Ellies said the Commission argued that most of the Coalition, made up of the unemployed and people on welfare, as well as university level students, is already covered by travel benefits in the UIC, welfare and OSAP programs. OSAP currently provides a subsidy of seven dollars a week for travel.

Ellies said, however, OSAP covers only 30 to 33 percent of Ontario's student population. "What about the other 70 percent of students that aren't covered by OSAP, but have to use TTC," he asked.

"Those people in no way get a subsidy . . . they've fallen through a crack in the system, a very big crack. Seventy percent of 140,000 students (in Ontario); that's about 100,000 students."

Ellies said he told the authors of the report, "if you hand in that report in its present state, or as you explained it to me, and I'll fight you tooth and nail on this, because your figures are erroneous."

If the final draft of the report comes out against the proposal of a half-price pass, Ellies said, he would try to convince the Metro Caucus, a body made up of student representatives from the colleges and universities in Metro Toronto, to allocate funds for a proper ridership survey, and get the TTC to agree beforehand to accept the results of the survey "so they can't say 'you shouldn't have done it this way'."

"They (Metro Council members) have got to realize," Ellies said, "that if they got elected because of the students then they're going to have to uphold one of the students' interests, which is (reduced) TTC fares."

Layton said that, although he was out of town on business and missed last week's meeting, "It looks from early indications that the report will not be favorable, so it looks like we'll have to gear up for battle once again."

We always knew this was going to be an uphill battle," he added. "It always is when you try to get some justice for students."



CYSF Director of Finance Valance Ellies, who sits on the Half-Price MetroPass Coalition, expects the TTC's feasibility study to be inaccurate.

FBI uncovers mail-order diploma scam

By ADAM BRYANT

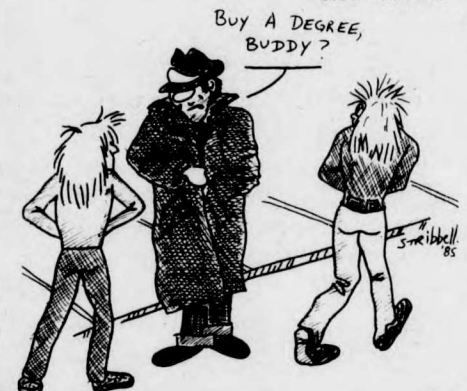
The US Federal Bureau of Investigation has identified 15 Canadians as clients of a mail-order diploma service which supplied fraudulent degrees, certificates and licenses to nearly 2,500 people during the past two years.

The case, resulting from an undercover sting known as Operation Dipscam, marks the first for the FBI, and involved forged diplomas from actual colleges and universities. Earlier investigations focused on degrees issued from fictitious schools.

Startling evidence suggesting that more than 10,000 North American physicians have fraudulent medical degrees surfaced recently during Congressional hearings. Among those testifying was a Toronto pharmacist who purchased his medical degree through a firm called Medical Education Placement for a fee of \$10,000.

Most Canadians on the list purchased forged diplomas from US colleges and universities, according to the FBI. Some 20 US residents purchased bogus University of Toronto diplomas, and an unknown number obtained fake McGill degrees.

—CAUT Bulletin



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