

February 10 wrap-up

Politicians peddle policies at student protest

By MICHAEL HOLLETT

Politicians and York community members discussed government education policies and criticized each other at a rally and seminar held February 10 to mark the provincial student protest held that day.

Representatives from the OFS, the Graduate Assistants Association (GAA), the York University Faculty Association (YUFA), the Bethune College Council and the Council of the York Student Federation (CYSF) addressed a noon hour bearpit rally attended by almost 100 students.

At one o'clock, Terry Jones of the Progressive Conservatives, John Sweeney of the Liberals and Odoardo Di Santo of the New Democratic Party spoke to over 100 students in the Vanier College dining hall, primarily on the topic of student unemployment.

The day's activities were part of the OFS's call for a boycott of classes "where possible" across the province to protest recently announced tuition fee increase for Ontario post-secondary students effective next year.

POLITICAL POSITIONS

The Vanier meeting gave York students the opportunity to hear the positions of all three parties on post-secondary education.

The meeting began with Terry Jones of the Conservatives defending his party's policies and then being attacked by the Liberal and NDP representatives. By the time question period rolled around the Conservative and Liberal speakers had set their sights on the NDP speaker.

In a brief speech Conservative MPP, Terry Jones asked students to remember that the last tuition fee increase was five years ago.

Jones said the fee increase would put a new emphasis on student employment. He said the provincial government would try to "set an example for the private sector" by hiring as many students as possible.

Liberal post-secondary education critic, John Sweeney led off his speech with an attack of the government's policy of higher tuition fees for foreign students.

Sweeney said there were many misconceptions about foreign students in Ontario. He said there were fewer foreign students in Canadian institutions than many people believed. He said foreign students made up only four per cent of the Ontario post-secondary student population. According to Sweeney, less than one per cent of



Representatives from the three provincial political parties brought their post-secondary education policies to York students on February 10. From left to right; Terry Jones of the Conservatives, Liberal John Sweeney and Odoardo Di Santo of the NDP.

all medical students are foreign students.

He added that 1968 was the first year in which there were more foreign students in Canadian institutions than Canadians studying abroad.

Sweeney was not entirely critical of the recent tuition increases for Ontario students. He said, "There is a limit to how much money the government can put into the post-secondary education system. There has got to be some student contribution towards the cost of education."

Sweeney said the Liberals were interested in a more "logical" form of fee hikes. He felt that students in a general BA program should have no fee hike, honours BA students should pay an additional \$50 in tuition while graduate students should pay \$200 more.

Sweeney explained his plan saying that graduate students have an easier time getting summer jobs and that they pay a lower percentage of the total cost of their education. Sweeney also felt that honours students were more likely to get jobs than general BA students.

NPD unemployment critic and Downsview MPP, Odoardo Di Santo said, "What the government is doing to you students is unbelievable.

"It's wrong to raise tuition fees because it means we are moving

towards a system of education that excludes lower and lower middle class students".

Di Santo said, "Education is a right, not something you get according to the wealth or lack of wealth of your family."

He said that if students want to understand what is happening to them they have to relate it to the general situation of the province and the country.

"The government has an announced policy of restraints, hospitals are being closed, social services are being cut back and tuition has been raised. We are in a recession and will be in the same situation next year. All forecasts are gloomy and growth is projected to be two per cent less than last year."

Di Santo added, "There will be even more unemployment and if this happens Ontario students will have a tougher time finding jobs because they are marginal workers and perform jobs not filled by skilled workers."

He said the federal government was also participating in the restraint program and pointed to the Anti-Inflation Board as the prime example.

RESTRAINT BURDEN

"Once again the burden of restraint is being put on the shoulders of the working people and the Ontario government was the first to jump into this program."

"The two governments are marching together and they don't know what they are doing to people like you who have to pay for their bad policies", he said.

Di Santo emphasized that an isolated student protest would face serious difficulties. He said it was important for students to link their campaign with that of the working people to oppose government cutbacks and restraint policies.

Di Santo also maintained that the provincial Liberal Party also supported these restraint policies. "They voted for McKeough's budget. If they had supported us, the policies of cutbacks might not have been implemented.

"It's easy for the Liberals to say they agree with students but when it comes to the crunch and decisions have to be made, the Liberals are with the Tories," he said.

Earlier in the day, York students heard community members explain their positions on the cutbacks issue.

All of the speakers at the noon hour rally, except the one from CYSF, were critical of the student federation for calling a referendum

it's numbers that count." Lorch urged students to organize themselves to fight government cutbacks. He said the government will respond to demonstrations and votes.

Lorch said, "Universities must be open to all and not become the playground of the wealthy few".

Lorch termed the government's higher tuition fees for foreign students as attacks on "the voteless ones". Lorch concluding saying, "Unless our wills are strong and made known we will get nowhere".

OFS fieldworker, Lynn Feldman discussed the approach being used by the federation to fight the fee hikes. She emphasized that the OFS is approaching various community groups, such as labour unions, school boards and so on for support.

UNION STRENGTH

Joanne Pritchard of the Bethune College council said the council was 100 per cent opposed to tuition increases. She termed this year's increase as "only the tip of the iceberg." Pritchard predicted that further increases will follow.

Pritchard said "effective student leadership" is necessary to fight the government's policies. OFS and NUS can become this leadership," she said.

CYSF's Paul Hayden, the last speaker, dealt with the issue of tuition hikes for foreign students. He said, "CYSF has not made too much known about the foreign students issue but we hope to change this.

"If the government can afford to send money to countries to buy machinery then we can afford to help needy students".

Hayden was then asked by Axelrod of the GAA, why the federation was trying to "dismantle" OFS. Chairperson, Stan White of the CYSF ruled Axelrod's question out of order. He was forced to repeat this throughout the following question period as listener after listener questioned CYSF's rationale for calling the OFS-NUS referendum and advocating withdrawal from the organizations.

about retaining membership in the OFS and the National Union of Students (NUS).

Paul Axelrod of the GAA said, "CYSF has made a terrible mistake in calling this referendum." Axelrod said the OFS and NUS campaigns have been effective, if not in stopping, at least slowing down the government's policy of cutbacks.

Axelrod described the plight of the graduate assistant saying, "we live a hand to mouth existence". Axelrod said GA's are paid only \$2,700 per year and are not permitted to take any other jobs to supplement this income.

Axelrod concluded saying the government responded to "flak". He said, "Even if demonstrations are boring, they do have an effect".

YUFA executive member, Lee Lorch told students that through his experience with YUFA he had learned that "in union there is strength".

He said, "In the political arena

Across Ontario

Laurentian closed but campuses calm

By MICHAEL HOLLETT

While York students attended a seminar and rally on February 10, student activity across the rest of the province ranged from minimal to successful boycotts.

Students at Sudbury's Laurentian University managed to shut down the university for half the day. Forty students picketed the university's entrances in the morning and persuaded student and staff — as well as city bus drivers — not to cross the picket lines.

Almost half the student body at the University of Windsor boycotted morning classes while 100 students staged a protest march on campus later that day.

Four hundred students attended an anti-cut backs rally at Hamilton's McMaster University. The rally at Mac was preceded by a lunch of bread and soup in anticipation of the number of students who might at the end of this year, find themselves in the breadline among the ranks of the unemployed.

At London's Fanshawe College and Toronto's Centennial College, about 25 per cent of the students boycotted classes. Forty students from Fanshawe travelled to Woodstock Ontario to demonstrate outside the constituency office of the Tory Minister of Colleges and Universities, Harry Parrot.

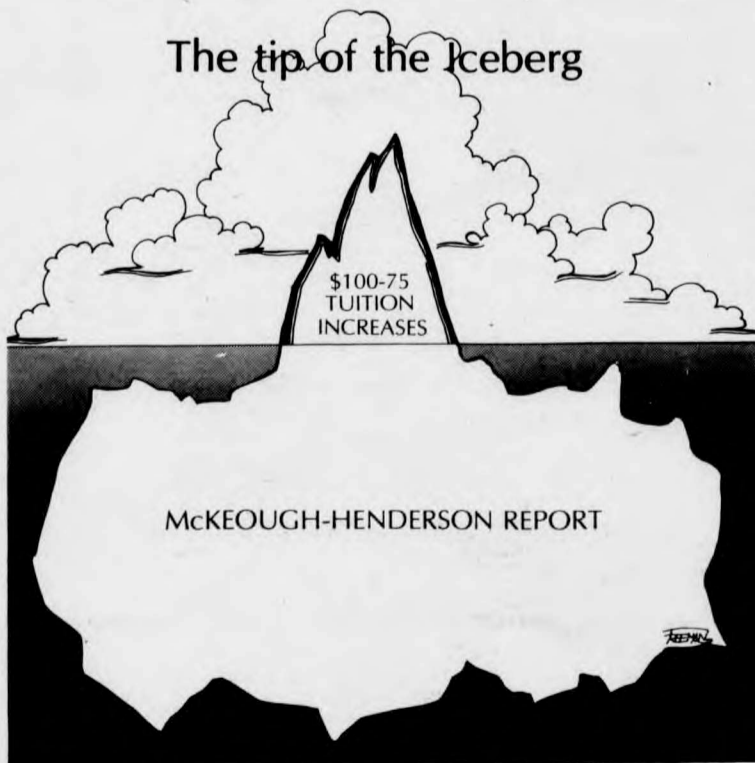
Three hundred students at the University of Toronto gathered at Convocation Hall to hear representatives of labour, the NDP and the student movement denounce the government's policies of cutbacks in post-secondary education.

On Feb. 9 at Ottawa's Carleton University 300 students participated in rallies and meetings.

Feb. 8 saw 500 students at the University of Ottawa meet to protest government policies and they managed to convince the university's senate to pass motions condemning the government's \$100 tuition increase for university students.

The remaining Ontario universities and community colleges were silent on the tenth though some are planning later actions.

The tip of the iceberg



The Ontario Federation of Students used this poster to build February 10 activities across the province.