



President of university, H. Ian Macdonald, ponders question during NSD encounter with students.

November 9th National Student Day

NDP against pending fee hike, Lewis draws biggest crowd

Elitism could creep back: Macdonald

By IAN KELLOGG

H. Ian Macdonald, president of York university, said in a National Student's Day bearpit speech he wants to ensure greater accessibility to university and defend the quality of university education. If accessibility is not guaranteed Macdonald fears elitism will return to Ontario's universities.

Macdonald spoke after Stephen Lewis, who gave him a tongue-in-cheek introduction. Lewis said Macdonald had done more for socialism in Ontario than almost anyone else. He said while Macdonald was deputy minister to provincial treasurer, Darcy McKeough, the NDP couldn't get their policies past. When Macdonald left, Davis lost votes and things got easier for the NDP, said Lewis. Lewis left immediately to attend question period at Queen's Park so Macdonald felt it would not be fair to respond.

Instead he delivered his speech. Greater accessibility to university for low income persons was the "major priority" he talked about. Macdonald said economic barriers are not the only ones preventing poorer students from attending university. He cited cultural, linguistic, and attitudinal barriers as also being important. Owing to these barriers "we are far from equality of opportunity in this province". However, Macdonald feels more restrictive enrolment and admissions policies are coming which will increase the inequality.

The basic reasoning behind such restrictions is to save taxpayers' money said Macdonald. He challenged this rationale saying most of the university's costs are fixed. The examples he gave were buildings that must be maintained and tenured professors who must be paid. He added that in other respects university budgets are already "very lean".

Macdonald tied cutbacks in university budgets to a lowering of quality in education. In York's case he pointed out that enrolment has increased about 5 per cent per year all through the seventies while the teaching staff has remained constant. The connection between the resulting larger classes and poorer education is not always direct he said but he felt larger classes must have an "impact".

Tuition fees are an ambivalent phenomenon according to Macdonald. He outlined two positions. On one hand, tuition increases (Macdonald like everyone else said he is expecting one to be announced shortly) are most often seen as a regressive measure, further discouraging the poorer student

from attending university. On the other hand, if tuition hikes are used to create scholarships they can be progressive, redistributing money from the richer students to the poorer ones. Macdonald personally thinks "university should be free", but he fears public resistance to free tuition would lead to counteracting higher admission requirements. These requirements, he said, would change university back into an elitist institution. Macdonald wants to avoid this development.

Macdonald told the audience he is organizing a public conference under the auspices of all post-secondary institutions in the province. This conference will discuss with the public what higher education should be.

To conclude Macdonald talked about the future of university. He foresees "more and more people in various stages of their careers entering university." This is a "second chance" for learning which Macdonald's generation did not enjoy but which he thinks will become more and more important in Canada's changing economy.

By MICHAEL HOLLETT
Speaking to the largest crowd of National Student Day, New Democratic Party leader, Stephen Lewis dealt with what he considered the key questions concerning post-secondary education in Ontario.

The unwillingness of the provincial government to develop a rational attitude towards post-secondary education, the need for universities to "define what they are all about", student employment, tuition and student assistance and universal accessibility were the themes Lewis hammered home to 150 gathered around the Central Square bearpit.

He said, "The arbitrary grant increases to the universities from the Duke of Kent, our name for provincial treasurer, Darcy McKeough, can no longer be tolerated".

Lewis also feels the time has come for a "tough appraisal of post-secondary education, especially universities". He said it is important for universities to re-define themselves.

Student unemployment could be alleviated if areas of potential employment were exploited, according to Lewis. He said students can do valuable summer work in areas of social services.

He feels any discussion of a fee increase must include a re-evaluation of the student assistance programme. Lewis was not sure he agreed with the NDP's policy of calling for free university tuition. He said, "I'm not sure we aren't trapping ourselves in political mythology."

"No matter what tuition fees are, by means of grants and loans, no student should be denied access to

due to lack of money," said Lewis. "The student assistance programme should not be set up so they will be burdened in later life. The student assistance programme must make accessibility to universities universal."

He added, "We are not going to support the Tories' tuition increase because it will not be followed by a re-assessment of the student support programme."

"Accessibility to university is usually put in a money context," Lewis said in making his final point. He felt there were more factors involved.

"In cultural and economic terms, money factors aside, a university education is not part of the social ken of many people in the working class. Their social and cultural milieu does not contemplate university," said Lewis.

"The sons and daughters of the working class must have the same opportunities to go to university as those more fortunate," he said.

In the lengthy question period that followed, Lewis predicted a provincial election within this university year.

He said he hoped for "enlightened and vigorous student activism in politics. Students can have more impact than ever before because of the minority government."

When asked about Boards of Governors, Lewis said, "the NDP has a tough line on democratizing the university and creating an egalitarian structure. We must redistribute the authority with students having parity with the rest on the boards."

"I was on the committee reviewing Western University's Board. The President of Western said capitalism would end if



CYSF president Edson during makeshift bearpit: "Who forgot to reserve the hall?"

students had parity on Boards of Governors. This kind of encouraged me," said Lewis.

Lewis said that if in power the NDP's priorities as a government would be "social programmes that create jobs and are indispensable in a civilized society."

He said his party would finance these programmes by not spending the same way the Progressive Conservatives have. He said the NDP wouldn't give money to Syncrude, wouldn't spend \$200 million expropriating land in Pickering, wouldn't give huge sales tax breaks to corporations among other things.

One way the NDP would raise funds would be to increase corporate taxes, Lewis felt not one would be disadvantaged by such an increase.

He also said the NDP would increase taxes for resource industries. Lewis said, "They are our resources damn it! Whether we squander them or get adequate royalties is up to the government. INCO can't take our ore to Indonesia."

Lewis agreed with a questioner from the audience and said he looked forward to the end of capitalism. But he said he was not optimistic it would happen in his lifetime. Said Lewis, "It is going to take some time to change a value system from one that is obsessively competitive to one that is euphorically cooperative."

"Capitalism has an incredibly frustrating resilience. You can never underestimate the beggars," said Lewis.

The meeting was delayed due to confusion surrounding its location. Lewis was originally booked into Curtis Lecture Hall-L, unfortunately, so was a class.

Said Lewis, "My life is filled with an unending succession of conspiracies. I was not surprised to see the room taken over for intellectual pursuits rather than the cultural and recreational activities of politics."

Libs: sliding scale a "lesser evil"

By AGNES KRUCHIO

The government is very sensitive to political pressure and has made changes in the proposed tuition fee increases as a political expediency, John Sweeney, education critic for the Liberal Party (Kitchener - Waterloo), told a gathering of under 10 students on Tuesday.

He said he had repeatedly asked both premier Bill Davis and colleges and universities minister Harry Parrot, but that he either got only evasive answers or refusals by both to answer the question.

It was only as a result of questioning by the opposition parties, he said, that the government announced that Third World students, supported by Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) would be exempted from the two to three hundred per cent tuition fee increases imposed upon international students. The government was very lax in checking out where the bulk of international students come from what their economic status was and what their situation was after spending a number of years in Canada. He condemned the government not only for not doing its homework, but for not having any clearly established educational economic or social criteria upon which the decision to increase foreign students' fees was based.

As adults, said Sweeney, university students should be responsible for a part of their educational costs. For that reason, the Liberals do not favor free tuition for all, nor do they believe that universities should be accessible to all.

In order to make paying for education more equitable for students from lower income brackets, Sweeney suggested a sliding scale: fees would be based upon both, the student's ability to pay, and also his - her academic performance. He admitted that basing the student's ability to pay on his parents' income would be unfair to some students, but, he said, this was the "lesser evil of several others."

Instituting free tuition would not abolish social inequalities, he said. "In France and Sweden, where there has been free tuition for the past 20 years, there is not significant change in the representation of lower social economic classes."

He did suggest, however, that the student aid scheme should be revamped in order to remove economic barriers to higher education. He suggested a reversal of the present loan - grant system, which, he said, was a disincentive to students.

The first \$2,000 of the amount of

money a student received from the government should be a grant.

A major crunch in post-secondary education is due in 1977, Sweeney warned. At that time, the 10 year-old Fiscal Arrangements Act will expire. According to this act, the federal government pays 50 per cent of the cost of post-secondary education. Since students contribute 16 per cent of the total cost of their education through their tuition fees, the provincial government foots only 34 per cent of the bill.

While the federal government will probably not pull out altogether of the financing scheme for post-secondary education, Sweeney said, it will limit the growth rate they are willing to pay for.



Liberal education critic John Sweeney patiently awaits arrival of his audience.