

CROSS-CANADA BRIEFS

Manitoba Students' union sides with administration

BY JEFF OLIVER

WINNIPEG (CUP) — After sitting on the fence for several days, the president of the University of Manitoba Students' Union has taken a side in the university's ongoing faculty strike.

In a move that surprised many, Students' Union president David Gratzer unofficially threw his support behind the university's administration in the ongoing labour dispute.

At issue in the strike, which started on October 18, is the administration's attempts to reduce the number of faculty members at the university.

The administration wants the power to dismiss professors for economic reasons — a move the faculty association claims will result in the loss of academic freedom, as controversial professors will not want to make their views known due to fear of retribution.

However, the administration claims that the university has no choice but to cut faculty positions due to declining government funding.

Although Gratzer said that both sides have their faults, he told a press conference that faculty members are not concerned with students.

Gratzer said that proposals made by the faculty association could lead to a doubling of tuition fees in two years, as an article in their proposal states that faculty layoffs will be a last resort.

According to Gratzer, other options for the university to make up for funding shortfalls may include raising tuition fees and cutting libraries.

"We oppose the stand of the faculty association because such actions would be extremely damaging to students," said Gratzer.

Canada doesn't need a Harvard

BY SIMON ROGERS

VANCOUVER (CUP) — Charges that Canadian universities are "mediocre" in the quality of education they offer are unfounded, say representatives from three British Columbia universities.

"For a country of our size and relative age, the quality of our system and some of our programs are absolutely first rate," said John Stubbs, president of Simon Fraser University.

Stubbs was responding to accusations made by Peter Godsoe, chairperson and chief executive officer of the Bank of Nova Scotia, that a lack of funding for programs and lax entrance requirements has made Canadian universities mediocre in comparison to their U.S. and international counterparts.

Godsoe compared Canadian public universities to privately-funded giants like Harvard and Oxford, warning that if schools in Canada fail to create "centres of excellence," Canada will lose its brightest lights to these renowned ivy league schools.

According to UBC student councillor David Borins, "Canadian universities provide an excellent education and an undergraduate program that educates people as critical thinkers. I have studied in Canada and in England. Canada's universities have a good reputation and command respect internationally and from people in the working world."

Children of the Revolution

BY STELLA TZINTZIS

MONTREAL (CUP) — Feelings of hope and jubilation turned into frustration and animosity yesterday evening, as students awaited final poll results at Café Campus, a popular hang-out for Université de Montréal (UdeM) students supporting the Yes side.

"I want to kill all the No's like Hitler killed the Jews," said Genevieve, a 21 year-old student at CEGEP St. Laurent.

"I feel like planting a bomb," she added, after the No side had won.

Wearing a Québec flag and blue and white makeup, Genevieve said she voted Yes because of her pride and honour as a Québécois.

"I am a patriot and I have to defend my culture," exclaimed Sam, a 35 year-old Yes supporter and musician. "Québec should stretch from one side of the continent to the other."

When asked what a sovereign Québec could offer young Québécois that Canada could not, 26 year-old Nathalie, a psychology major at UdeM, replied, "a feeling of belonging and unity."

"I want to have my own country. I want to give my children and myself hope for the future," she said.

Etienne, a 20 year-old CEGEP student who is also a Yes supporter, believes that Québec was being held back within Canada. Money that Québec gives to the federal government could be used to train the unemployed Québécois, not English Canadians, he argued.

At about 9:30 p.m., the No forces gained strength. When 95 per cent of the votes were in and the No side was clearly leading, the crowd settled down and kept quiet, hoping that things would turn around. They did not.

In the end, 24 year-old Alain, owner of a used bookstore, said that there were no words to express his feelings.

"I blame the politicians," Alain said as he held back tears. "It is the fault of those who voted No: the bourgeois, the English, and the simple-minded."

Alberta examines performance-based education funding

BY DAVID MICHAEL LAMB

TORONTO (CUP) — An Alberta government plan to introduce a performance-based funding scheme has received mixed reviews from the province's students.

Arthur Wong, president of the student union at the University of Lethbridge, said funding based on performance is a big mistake.

It may just be a way for the government to reduce funding to universities, according to Wong.

"Performance-based funding says that either you play by the government's rules or you lose all your money," he said.

Under the performance-based funding scheme, the Ministry of Advanced Education intends to base up to six per cent of each university's funding on various measures such as the satisfaction of graduates and student employability.

The changes to university funding were prompted by a general dissatisfaction with the current funding scheme, according to Bob Dawson, a spokesperson for the Ministry of Advanced Education.

"There is nothing in our current funding formula that recognizes performance excellence," he said.

The provincial government has frozen university grants for several years in an effort to trim the province's debt.

According to Dawson, students are dissatisfied with the current funding plan based on block grants because it does not address the different needs of each university.

"Nobody likes the way the system works now. It's out of date,"

he said.

With the new system, it will be up to individual universities — and not the government — to determine the criteria used to judge them, according to Dawson.

"If an institution meets and exceeds those indicators, then it receives more money. If not, a proportion will be taken away," he said.

Having individual universities devise the performance criteria is the most important part of the plan, according to Kate Kimberley, president of the student union at the University of Calgary.

"The lynch pin is having the right performance indicators. They have to be as subjective as possible," she said.

She adds though that measuring how many students get jobs after graduation might not be a good indicator. It would be better to ask graduating students if they think they have the skills

they need to get a job.

However, Wong says the new scheme will mean less profitable areas of study will get the biggest funding cuts.

"Management and medicine will get the money. Social sciences won't get the money because there is no 'immediate gratification' [in the job market]," said Wong.

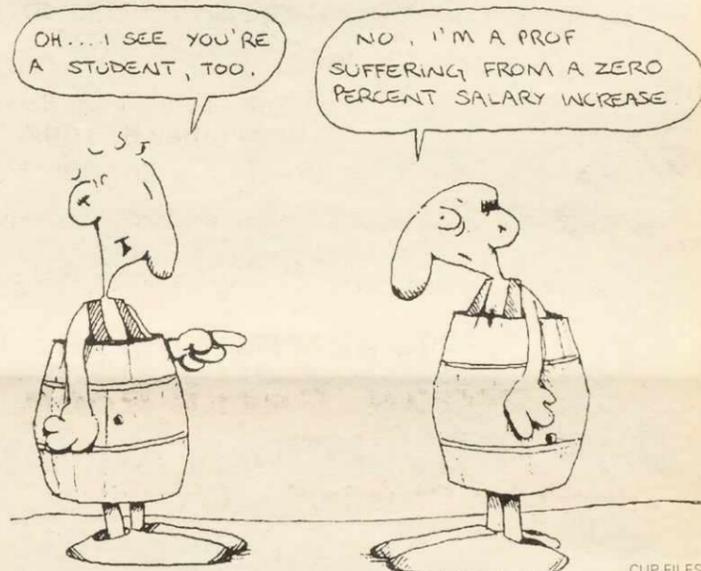
The recommendations are contained in a provincial discussion paper, and will be the subject of a Minister's Forum on Education to be held at the end of November.

Kimberley says she is pleased the government is listening to students.

"This provincial government is really good at consulting. [We] just hope that they're listening."

But Wong says the province will regret the day the scheme was introduced.

"In general, I think the population will look back and say this was a mistake," he said.



Report recommends higher education overhaul

BY GAZETTE STAFF

The times, they are a-changin'.

They have to, at least according to a recently released report on university financing in Nova Scotia.

"The achievement and maintenance of the dual goals of accessibility and high quality education...will require radical changes," stated a report prepared by the Committee on University Financing (CUF) for the Nova Scotia Council on Higher Education (NSCHE).

CUF was established in March, 1993 by NSCHE to make recommendations concerning the financing of Nova Scotia Universities.

Among the nine recommendations offered in the 49-page report, notable ones included:

- that "system goals for consideration by government be used as a basis for the allocation of public funding and that allows for the pursuit of institutional goals."

- "developing an integrated post-secondary education system which includes both universities and community colleges."

- that the NSCHE "identify enrolment corridors for the whole university system, for individual universities...(and that) those corridors be used in ...allocation of funding."

- that the NSCHE and the provincial government address the financial access problem that many students face. Suggested solutions are "a bursary and/or loan remission program, a student employment program...and a provincial scholarship program."

- that the NSCHE "implement the funding formula put forward in this report."

These recommendations are necessitated by the fact that money allocated for universities has been decreasing and will continue to do so, according to provincial budget projections. Over \$217 million was allocated for Nova Scotia universities in the 1991-92 school year; that amount may fall to \$181 million by 1997-98, or even lower.

"More money is coming from students and other sources, and less from governments," said the report.

And, with the introduction of

the Canada Health and Social Transfer (CHST) as a replacement for the Established Programs Financing, a further decrease in federal money allocated for Nova Scotia universities seems inevitable. As less federal money will be received by Nova Scotia in the form of the CHST, there will be fewer dollars to split among the sectors of health, social welfare, and education — leaving post-secondary institutions to investigate other funding venues.

With funding decreases and enrolments continuing to jump, education costs have been increasing for students, and almost certainly will continue to do so. Over the last 10 years, government funding (in constant dollars) has decreased by 6.5% while enrolment has jumped 24%, according to the report.

While "major changes in the amount and form of student aid" are being considered so that present tuition levels may be raised, CUF recognizes that students requiring full assistance will be saddled with a debt upon graduation that would be "frighteningly high."