

Ontario students fight hikes

OTTAWA (CUP) -- Students at ten Ontario campuses boycotted classes Feb. 10 to protest province-wide tuition fee hikes of \$100 for universities and \$75 for the 22 colleges of applied arts and technology.

And about 300 Carleton University students left their classes to attend a general assembly Feb. 9.

Details were sketchy at press time, but according to reports from the Ontario Federation of Students (OFS), the following campuses were boycotting classes Feb. 9 and 10:

- the colleges of Humber, Fanshawe and Niagara;

- the universities of McMaster, Lakehead, Carleton, Windsor, Toronto, Laurentian, York and Brock.

At Laurentian, classes were shut down and about 40 students were picketing the university entrances. University support staff and city bus drivers were not crossing the line,

according to OFS staff member Rick Gregory.

In St. Catharines, Brock University and Niagara College students met together in a mass rally on the Brock campus.

At Carleton, 300 students assembled and heard student president Scott Mullin argue for a redistribution of the taxation system: "If all taxpayers pay, all qualified persons should be able to attend (a post-secondary institution)."

Student union vice-president and National Union of Students (NUS) president Riel Miller followed this up with a call for full public funding of post-secondary education "instead of private corporation investments financed by tax breaks."

NUS executive-secretary Dan O'Connor told the students that "if we sit back and do nothing, nobody else will move first." He said student protests in Alberta and New Brun-

wick "originally appeared futile" but were effective in influencing future government decisions.

Carleton president Michael Oliver said he agreed with "a transfer of payment from lower to higher income groups" and that he supported the abolition of tuition, but since "neither is feasible, the only option is raise tuition to the point which is necessary, and balance it with a loan structure in order to aid low income groups."

The boycott of classes strategy was set at a special OFS-sponsored meeting of student leaders in mid-January, as part of their campaign to express opposition to the tuition hikes announced by the government last November and set for the 1977-78 academic year.

The hikes will bring university fees to about \$700 per year and college fees to \$325.

The Federation and individual student unions are also engaged in

a publicity campaign aimed at community groups, politicians and the media, according to the strategy laid down at mid-January meeting. Also in the works are the formation of local "election preparedness committees" whereby students are to canvas politicians to find out where they stand on the tuition issue.

Student leaders oppose the hike on the grounds that tuition acts as a financial barrier to low-income students, and say the hike, and government statements that tuition fees may rise in future years, is an indication that the Henderson Report is being implemented.

The report on special program spending, compiled under the direction of former auditor-general Maxwell Henderson, and released in late 1975, advocated tuition fee increases of 65 per cent to make up for government funding cutbacks.

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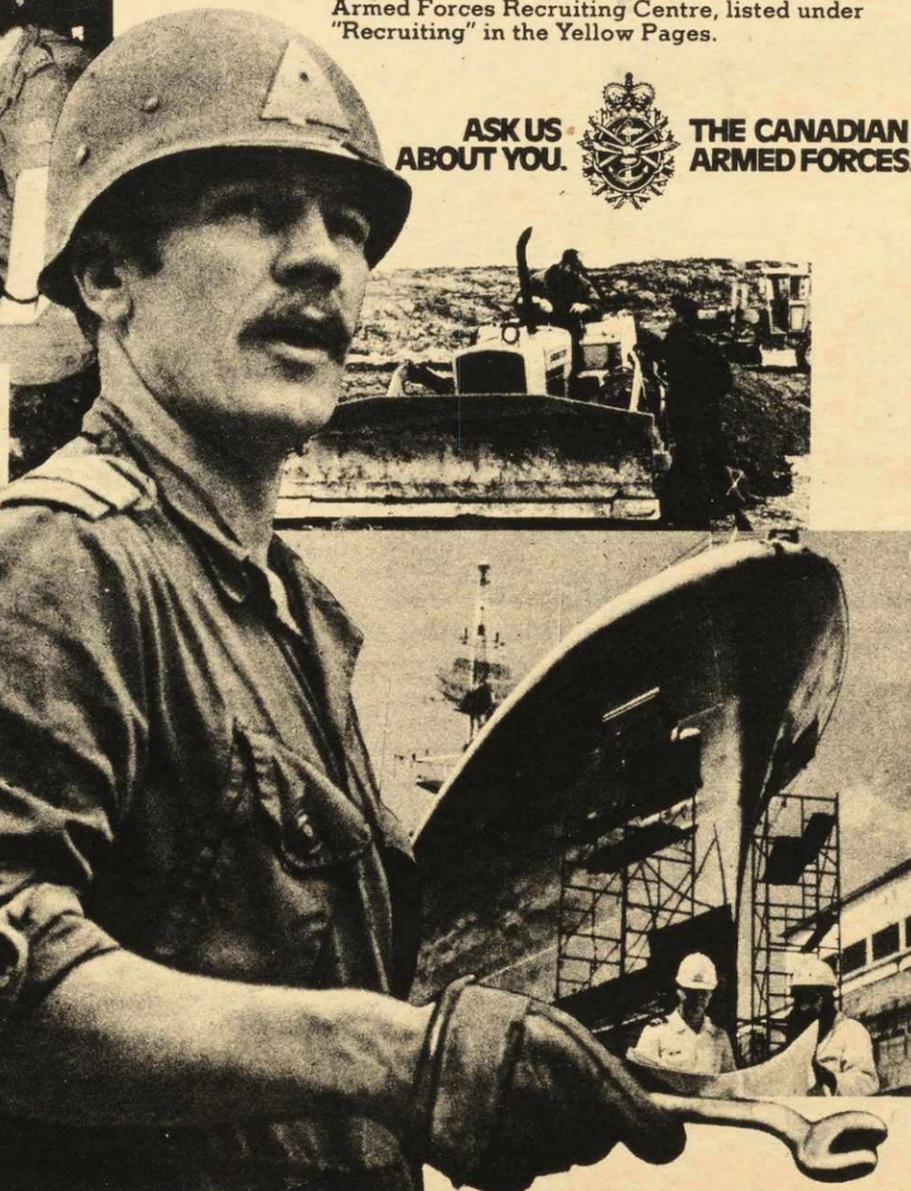
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