

Editorial

It's time for universities to back up their demands

York University has once again been refused funding. That in itself is not news, but this time the refusal came from, of all places, the City Council of Metropolitan Toronto.

York President Harry Arthurs, along with the presidents of the University of Toronto, Ryerson Polytechnical Institute, the Ontario College of Art, submitted a proposal to the council, requesting for \$1 million toward student scholarships and bursaries.

The proposal was rejected in an overwhelming 29-9 vote by Council members. North York Controller Bob Yuill epitomized the Council's way of thinking, saying students can get by "without handouts" and "there's more than enough dough out there."

Yuill and most of the Council apparently have the archaic notion that all students are able to live at home. In today's society with its attendant family problems, not every student is in a position to stay with Mom and Dad. Toronto's inflated cost of living makes it very difficult for a student to live on his or her own and go to university full-time, even with government assistance.

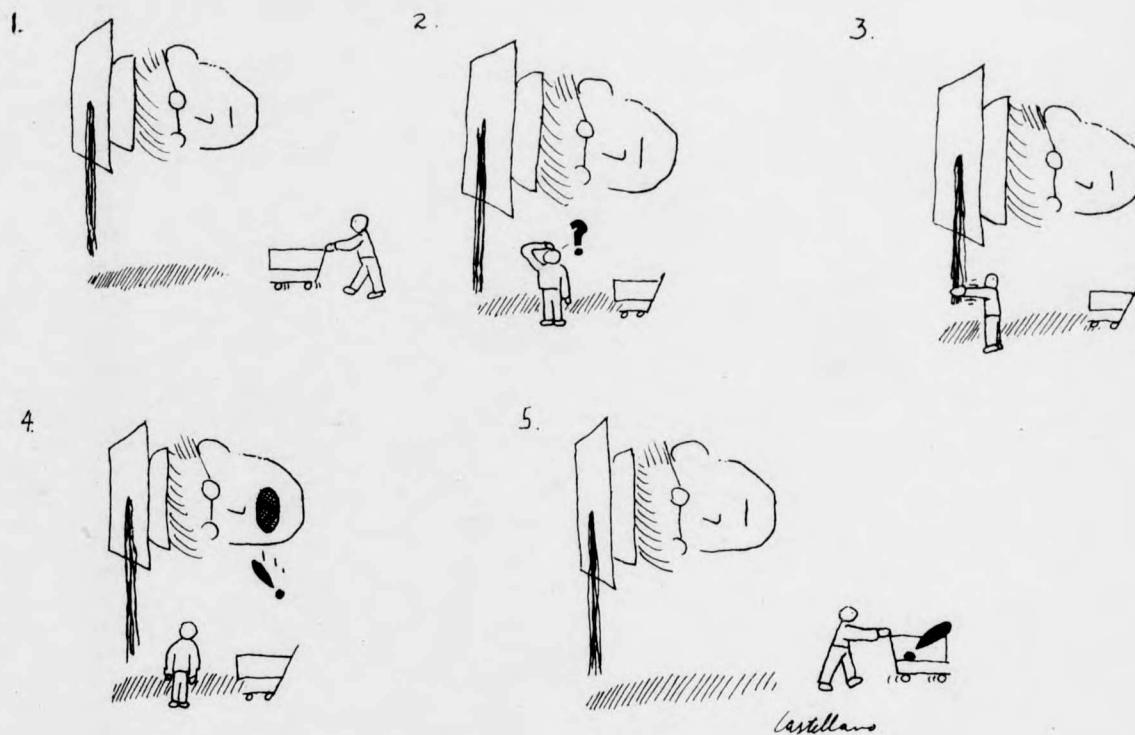
If Yuill's attitude is indeed typical of that of his fellow Council members, it is no wonder the fund proposal was stillborn. But they are not wholly to blame for the plan's stunning rejection; the proposal itself is flawed.

The Metro Universities Fund Proposal lacks hard data and concrete arguments, and reads like a juvenile essay on the importance of universities to Toronto society. Instead of five institutions of higher learning stressing the necessity of greater student funding, they come across like kids begging their parents for candy. Their justification: since their siblings received sweets, they should too.

The fact that Kingston, Sudbury, Thunder Bay and London provide money to their hometown students is not going to convince Metro councillors, who are bombarded with monetary requests daily, to do the same. Besides, according to Council of York Student Federation President Gerard Blink, the \$1 million figure "was merely arbitrary," not worked out by any formula of need.

According to the proposal, the money would be distributed for scholarships and bursaries. Academic excellence and monetary need, however, are two entirely different matters. The proposal doesn't specify who would be eligible for bursaries, or, for that matter, which students are most in need of funding.

How is Metro Council supposed to seriously consider a monetary proposal devoid of financial justification? Blink said that the proposal was intended to be merely "an icebreaker." Regardless of the results, the ice has been broken. Metro knows that the universities want—and feel they deserve—the money. Now it's time for the Metro Universities Fund Committee to show Council, in concrete terms, just how badly students need the money.



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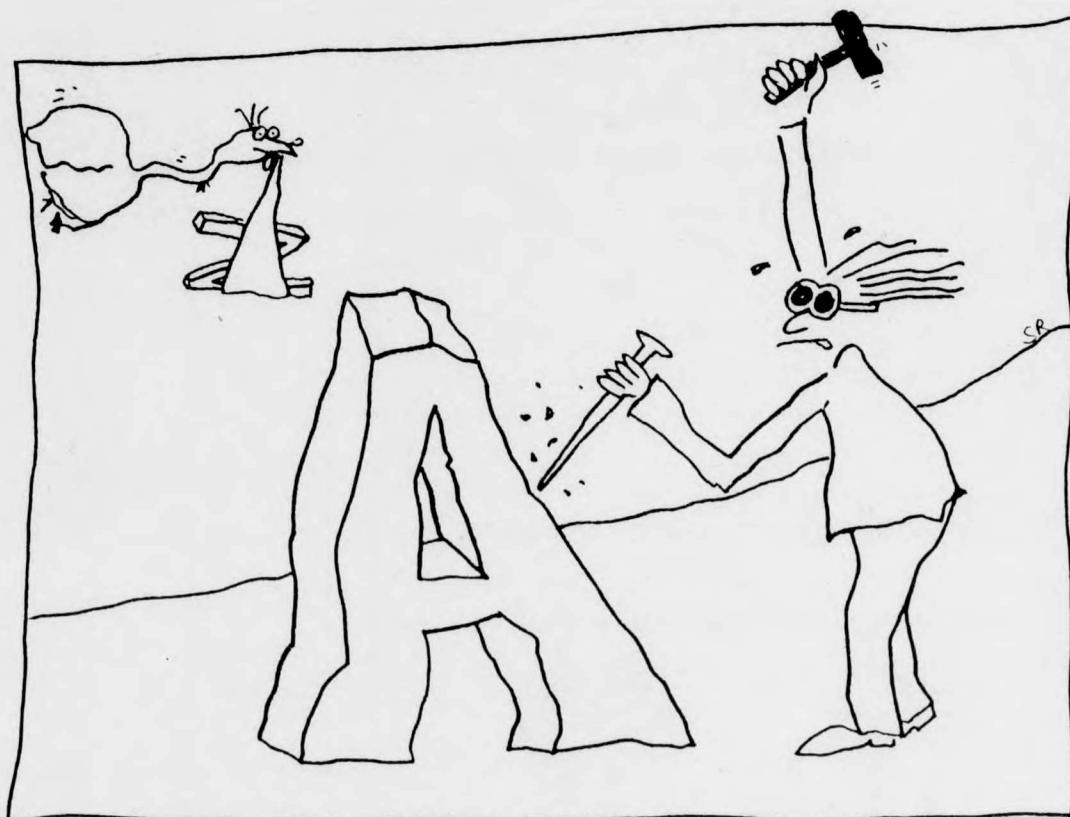
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