

Differential fees to hit Quebec

MONTREAL (CUP)—Although Quebec ministry of education officials refuse to comment, it looks like differential tuition fees will be a reality for international students attending universities in that province.

Earlier this month, Premier Rene Levesque accused McGill University of supplying tax-paid post-secondary education to "American kids, Commonwealth kids or people from all over," and now a vice-principal at the university has confirmed differential fees will be coming, although he wasn't sure when.

Vice-principal (Planning) E.J. Stansbury said the fees would be implemented according to the Ontario method, rather than that used in Alberta. Differential fees for international students were implemented this fall in Ontario colleges and universities, and the visa students pay two and a half times the tuition paid by Canadian students. In Alberta, where the controversial fees have existed for two years, fees are set by legislation after negotiation between the government and universities.

In Ontario, international undergraduate students pay \$1,550 per year. Speculations by an official at Concordia University in Montreal earlier this fall set fees for Quebec somewhere around \$1,500.

Although Stansbury sees "no particular advantage" to differential fees, he claimed there would probably be no drastic drop in non-Canadian enrolment when the fees are implemented.

But figures released recently by the Council of Ontario Universities (COU) indicate that international

student applications dropped by 20.9 per cent in Ontario this September.

Stansbury termed concern over the figures from groups such as the Ontario Federation of Students "over-reaction" and said non-Canadian applications had been declining for a number of years. But the COU figures showed there was no significant change from last year in the national total of applications from visa students.

Levesque's remarks earlier in the month centered on figures for students leaving the province after receiving dentistry degrees from McGill. He claimed that the 55 per cent of McGill dentistry graduates who leave the province was attributable to their origin—presumably international. "Do you think that can go on forever?" he asked. "Are we rich enough to do that?"

But McGill officials have presented figures showing that of the 166 students enrolled in dentistry at the university, 149 are Quebec residents. Of the remaining, 12 came from other provinces, three were American, and two were from other countries.

The McGill official was surprised that Levesque continued to believe that the exodus of students graduating from McGill was caused by their being international students.

Differential fees for international students have been in force for some time at the province's CEGEPs. These community colleges, free to Canadians and landed immigrants, charge \$800 in tuition fees, and another \$100 in other special charges, to international students.



Del Photo/DeLoray

"Judging from Dr. Laurin's warped version of history, I have concluded that the honourable education minister of Quebec is in dire need of psychiatric help." So muttered everyone's favorite Irishman, globe-trotting Bryce Mackasey, who graced the halls of Dalhousie last Thursday to spread the blessed word of federalism. Mackasey, former postmaster general, is presently a liberal MLA in the Quebec National Assembly. Bryce really wanted to be the chairman of the CNR, but that job went to someone else. He then decided that he wanted to go into Quebec politics because he felt that "English Quebecers, who were hurt under Bill 22, needed more representation". He thus joined forces with the very author of that bill, Robert Bourassa, who was trounced in the election of Nov. 15. Mackasey, without the cabinet position he thought he had all tied up in Quebec City, is now doing his "small part to keep Quebec within confederation," by appearing on obscure CBC television shows across the country.

Academic barriers at Dal

by Eric Lawson

Universities in central and western Canada are currently involved in heated debates over the increasing use of various entrance examinations. Tests such as the Service for Admission to College and University (SACU), as well as various English language proficiency tests, most of which were discontinued in the 1960's, are being used again on many Canadian campuses.

The rationale given for these tests has been drawn primarily from the results of studies showing a high level of illiteracy among incoming and first year students.

Students, faculties, and some administrations, however, question the examination's ability to test the student's coherence in the English language, as the tests are primarily multiple choice and short essay type. People opposed to these tests are worried that the tests are not merely diagnostic, but are used as screening devices.

Dalhousie University uses only the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) from Princeton University, which all foreign students applying here must write. No definite pass mark is prescribed, but a mark of 500 is generally required.

The test is not the sole factor involved in evaluating foreign students, but a poor mark results in an automatic rejection. No follow-up remedial courses are offered.

For various reasons, approximately one-half of the foreign students applying to the Faculty of Arts and Science, are refused.

One of the chief reasons that extensive proficiency tests are not used at Dalhousie is that an extremely large percentage of the foreign students applying here are already proficient in English. Again using Arts and Science as an example, approximately 35% of the foreign students enrolled are from the United States and Britain.

The administration is also dissatisfied with the proficiency in the English language of domestic High School students applying for university admission.

The administration, however, is apparently resigned to the situation, as evidenced by the Registrar, Arnold J. Tingley: "educators have been complaining about the quality of students since Socrates, and there's not that much that can be done about it."

Rowland J. Smith, head of the Dalhousie English department, claims that his department also does not have any immediate plans for remedying student illiteracy like lobbying for the use of the old SACU tests. Individual English professors, particularly at the first year level, are however conducting diagnostic tests in their classes, and setting up special remedial sessions for those showing a weakness in writing the English language.

The International Students Association is displeased with the use of the TOEFL tests, but feels that it is relatively powerless to do anything about the university policy. The Association has never filed an official complaint concerning the tests.

According to the Association's

interim President, Mahmood Alam, international students feel the tests are difficult obstacles to many capable people. If a student wishes to write the TOEFL test in his/her home country, for instance, it is mailed to the Embassy and in many cases the test must be written in the capital city of the country, making it difficult for students to gain access to them.

In Dalhousie's professional and graduate schools, nationality can be an obstacle to the student. The Dalhousie Law School maintains a 60% level of Nova Scotians in its school. 15% of the students are from the other Atlantic Provinces, with 25% being left to all other areas, including the rest of Canada.

Most of the school's financial backing comes from Nova Scotia and the other Atlantic Provinces, so

the Law faculty feels obligated to spend the money on students coming from this area.

Law degrees are also unportable and many foreign students wishing to return home to practise find their Dal laws degree cannot be used to practise in their country.

Proficiency tests and other academic qualifications for High School and Overseas students are not regarded as a big issue at Dalhousie, but many questions are left unanswered concerning the prospects for acceptance of foreign students and students emanating from an apparently weak High School system. This development is best illustrated by Tingley, who said he didn't feel "that we had any great responsibility to educate foreign students in the first place."

Students boycott tuition

MONTREAL (PEN-CUP)— The administration of the Universite de Montreal has extended the deadlines for paying tuition fees by a week, but the 6,000 boycotting students say they want to have at least until Christmas or they'll initiate a general strike.

One thousand students brought their demands to Quebec education minister Jacques-Yvan Morin, who happened to be on the campus Oct. 25, the original deadline set by the university for payment of tuition fees.

Until recently, students at U de M were allowed to pay their fees in the spring, when government loans and bursaries had been received. This year, officials have demanded that students pay the fees this week, or have their registration annulled.

"What we want is a continuation of what existed before," explained Pierre Girouard, secretary-general of the central student union (FAECUM) on the campus. "Before of high student unemployment, many students don't have enough to pay their fees."

Morin explained the government's policies on post-secondary education, but was unable to answer the student's questions on the tuition issue.

The students doubt the administration will go ahead with plans to void registration of boycotting students. The student union has pointed out that most of the university's operating budget comes from funds it receives from the provincial government on a per capita basis.