

80's finds student protests polite

TORONTO (CUP) — Student protests just ain't what they used to be. The presidents of Ryerson Polytechnical, York University and the University of Toronto were not the targets, but the organizers of an Oct. 16 demonstration against underfunding.

The more than 6,000 students who attended the two-hour rally at the U of T downtown campus didn't have to boycott their classes — they had already been cancelled by the presidents.

The demonstration was notably different from protests of years past. Participants were asked to refrain from cheering, questions from the audience were planted and cut off early, and after the carefully orchestrated event was over,

students were herded back onto buses returning them to overcrowded classrooms.

This "80s-style" rally is preferred by some, including Gregory Sorbara, colleges and universities minister in the Liberal government. "This is a different era," Sorbara said after the rally.

"I stop listening when people start getting angry. The premier doesn't respond to displays of anger," Sorbara said.

This attitude was in stark contrast to the advice provincial New Democratic leader Bob Rae delivered to students.

"Stop being so damned polite about what's going on in your universities," said Rae. "And I say this to a generation of students who

have been accused of being apathetic and resigned to the status quo.

"Get off your butts and start fighting for what you believe in."

Ontario ranks ninth among provincial per-student spending on post-secondary education.

Provincial Progressive Conservative leader Larry Grossman, who was greeted by a chorus of boos and hisses and was interrupted several times by hecklers, issued a steep challenge to Sorbara and the Liberals.

Grossman said he "would stand behind" a 26 per cent increase in base funding to universities over three years. Grossman also admitted universities were underfunded during the long Tory reign in

Ontario.

Sorbara said students will have to take their message off campus to attract popular support. "It has to be there in the streets as well. You must build a broad consensus that says that the vitality and the future of this province depend on our ability to make ourselves collectively a keener, smarter, more educated people."

John Polanyi, the U of T professor who only 24 hours earlier had been awarded the Nobel Prize for Chemistry, was received by a standing ovation and wild applause.

His message, however, was forboding.

"Now I enjoy the kind of notoriety that comes from the combina-

tion of good luck, intelligent, well-educated colleagues, and adequate facilities," said Polanyi. "I thank God for the first, and the Canadian government for the others."

"I wonder, however, if in this province we aren't relying more heavily on God than the government," he said.

Faculty and staff representatives complained of deteriorating working conditions, outdated lab equipment, and overcrowding.

Students at the rally carried signs with such polite slogans as, "Down With Underfunding", "We Need More Courses", and "Hi Mom... Send Money".

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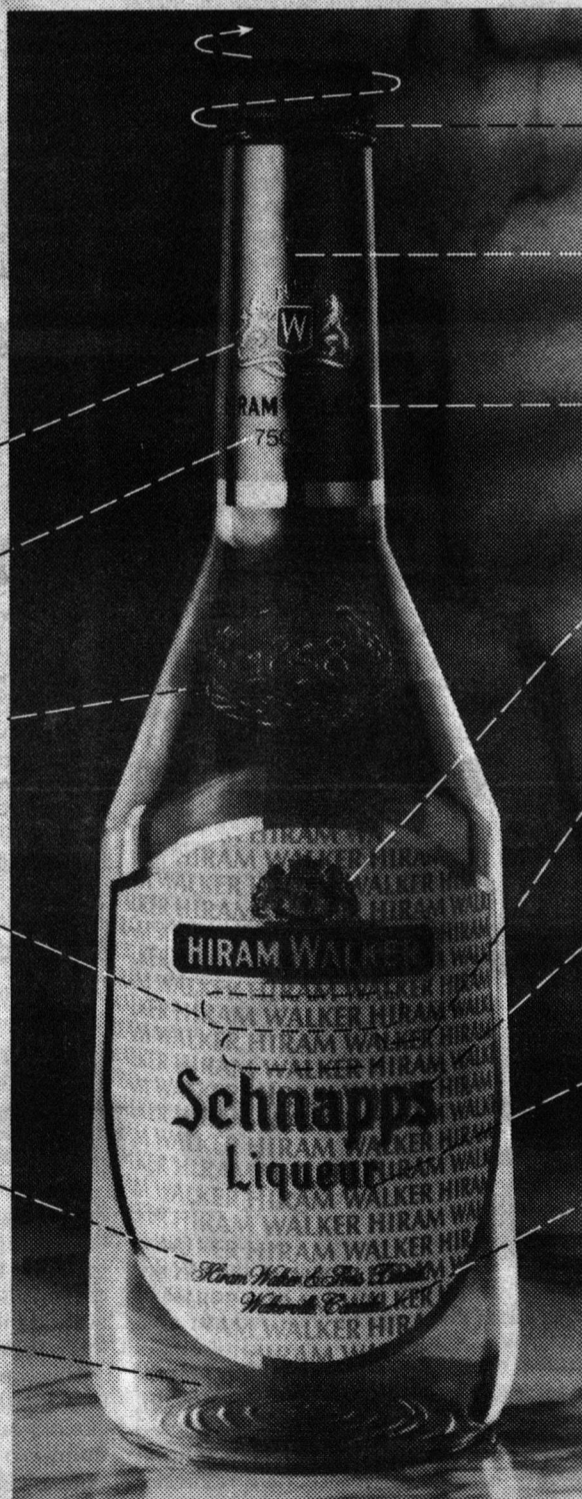
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