

Survival in the 80's

Provinces to be held accountable

Battle lines are being drawn. The federal government may require greater accountability on the part of the provinces towards disbursement of Established Programs Financing (EPF).

EPF is a large lump sum contribution from the federal government to the provinces for social programs, health-care, and post-secondary education.

As EPF stands now, the provinces are under no obligation to distribute the portion set aside for post-secondary education to education. They may use it as they see fit.

It is difficult to prove that money designated to education is spent elsewhere, but indications do exist.

The federal Department of Secretary of State estimates \$1.3 billion of total EPF transfers in 1977-78 was intended for post-secondary education.

An increase of 46 per cent is seen in 1980-81, when the amount rose to \$1.9 billion.

Statistics Canada shows total provincial operating grants to institutions, including sponsored research, increased by only 25 per cent over the same period.

The difference in figures must be going somewhere.

This may explain why the Parliamentary Task Force on Federal-Provincial Fiscal

Arrangements concluded:

"The thread that runs through this report therefore is not a budgetary calculation, but accountability in Parliament for federal spending. We concentrate not on the government's expenditure plan, but on institutional changes designed to ensure that Parliament itself can deal more effectively with, and be held more fully

accountable for federal revenues flowing directly to provincial governments ..."

This recommendation received strong and varied support, but may be viewed by the provinces as a move by federal government into their affairs.

Such a stand can have two results according to the Task Force report:

(a) the recommended ac-

countability, or;

(b) the federal government's withdrawal of support from education programs to areas designated for federal care.

The second option could have devastating effects on post-secondary institutions in many provinces, including Alberta.

PEF transfers in 1977-78 represented 60 per cent of the total

federal grants to Canadian universities. This figure rose to 76 per cent in 1980-81, according to statistics in *University Affairs*.

EPF transfers made up 63.6 per cent of Alberta's provincial grant to universities in 1980-81. Withdrawing over half of the

University of Alberta's finances would have serious effects, says the report.

Ontario council warns of crisis

Toronto (CUP) — The Ontario provincial government can no longer afford to "muddle through" in its funding of the universities. Either fund the universities to the level of inflation or start closing some down, advises a government-established twelve-member com-

mittee on the future role of the universities in Ontario has strong words for the provincial government's under-funding of the universities, in its recently released report.

Dr. Stuart Smith, leader of the provincial Liberals, says "Ontario's university system today stands at the brink of disaster...the level of underfunding of the

universities has now reached crisis proportions."

Smith's words were echoed by David Bates, president of the Ontario Council on University Affairs (OCUA).

"The universities are at a critical stage in their lives and their futures rest squarely in the hands of the government," says Smith. The report "vindicates what professors and university presidents alike have been saying for the past five years: the universities must have adequate funding."

Contrary to the government's statements over the past five years the report admits that Ontario's university system has not been able to provide quality education and accessibili-

ty," said Barb Taylor, chairperson of the 220,000 member Ontario Federation of Students.

University of Toronto president James Ham, referring to the past five years of underfunding as "Death by Torture" for the universities, also called for increased funding.

"If the universities are not strong, neither will be your future."

Educators and students were united in their opposition to the recommendation to restructure the university system and possible to close some universities.

Council of Ontario Universities spokesperson William Sayers said he thought university closings were "a very slim possibility."

On the other hand, Taylor asserted that no university was safe from the threat of closure.

Premier William Davis recently said he would be reluctant to close a university. But Taylor pointed out that the dire situation of the university system had been known "to the government for at least four years and it has failed to act."

At the U of T, Students' Administrative Council president Matt Holland called the report "predictable." He didn't think any university would be closed, and thought the chances were fairly slim that U of T programs would be trimmed. But he worried tuition fees might have to rise to provide some of the extra revenues the universities need.

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