

occupation support grows

Administrators unyielding

OTTAWA (CUP)—Administrators at three Ontario universities under occupation have not yielded to students' demands, despite growing support among students for the occupations.

The occupations in administration offices in the universities of Toronto and Guelph and at Ryerson Polytechnical institute are continuing. The occupiers are demanding cancellation of classes March 16 so that students from those institutions can attend an anti-cutbacks rally at the Ontario legislature.

Similar demands were won last week at Trent and Carleton universities and earlier this month at York university in Toronto. An occupation last week at McMaster university won support from the university senate for the rally, but no classes were cancelled.

The occupiers were also demanding an end to cutbacks at the institutions.

At Ryerson and Guelph, the number of occupiers has consider-

ably increased since the occupations started March 13. By the afternoon of March 14, 75 people were occupying three floors of the administration building at Ryerson. According to occupier Robin Saunders, an increase from the initial 14 occupiers in one office.

Over 100 Guelph students were on the occupied fourth floor of the university centre, the night of March 13, according to occupiers.

Twenty to 25 students stayed on the floor permanently, while another 50 students "percolated in and out". The occupation had started with ten students.

A public meeting March 14 on the occupations, 200 to 300 students appeared, most of whom favoured the occupiers' demands.

Occupiers said the general student opinion at Guelph was "very very positive", after conducting a

speaking tour through classes early March 14.

At the U of T, the student support for the occupation is "fairly good", according to occupier John Doherty. The twelve occupiers have not allowed any other students to join the occupation, he said, because they would prefer supporters to be out distributing leaflets and pamphlets and talking to classes about the March 16 rally.

Board passes the buck

REGINA (CUP)—An estimated 500 to 600 students occupied a Board of Governors Meeting March 14 at the

University of Regina, demanding a freeze on tuition fees and a public stand by the board against the

education funding policies of the Provincial Government.

The board flatly refused both demands.

About 100 students gathered outside the meeting room early on March 14, carrying placards and chanting slogans opposing a proposed 8.2 per cent fee increase. The demonstrators demanded entry to the Board Meeting, and were allowed to meet with the Board.

Students jammed the meeting room and as some of them left for classes as the morning wore on, many others filled their places.

"We don't want more words. We

want action," said student councillor Bob Buckingham. "We're tired of the secrecy of Board Meetings and want to see what your policies and philosophies are regarding education."

Student Board of Governors representative Jeff Parr said students are tired of the "non-committal shrug of the shoulders" which the Board has given their concerns. "Students are asking the Board to join with us to support us in our struggle for a better and more accessible education."

In the debate that lasted more than four hours, the Board rejected the student view, claiming that the demands were illogical, simplistic, and antagonistic. The Board refused to budge from its proposed fee increase.

During the debate, Board Members wavered between saying tuition fees increases are better

than increased taxes, and saying they always fight for more money from government. At one point Board Members claimed tuition fees are not really a deterrent, and later said they hate to increase fees because they realize the hardship that results.

The Board blamed the situation on the student aid system, the Universities Commission, the Provincial Government, inflation, recession and a host of other reasons. As for deficit financing, Board Members claimed this would be harder on future students, although their present budget includes a \$100,000 deficit.

Buckingham expressed shock that Board Members have no definite policy on tuition fees and said fee decisions are made in an ad hoc way "we're going to keep pushing you to take action before it's too late," he told the Board.

Gerry and George come to lunch

Nova Scotia Premier Gerald Regan and George Mitchell, Education Minister for the province, will be featured in a forum in the SUB cafeteria Friday at noon. Students are urged to attend and challenge the men on Nova Scotia's education policy.

Who does the cutting ?

OTTAWA (CUP)—Ten years ago, the federal and provincial governments committed themselves to equal access to post-secondary education for all students, and to preserve the quality of that education.

Today some governments say the same things, if not so audibly, but their actions betray a different story.

Financial barriers are reducing the participation rate of young people attending universities and colleges, and in many provinces the absolute numbers of students are declining for the first time in more than two decades, despite the fact that more students will be leaving high school every year until 1983.

Governments aren't guaranteeing a quality education for the students who are still financially able to participate in the system. Grants per student are in fact dropping in some provinces.

Cutbacks in post-secondary education funding, along with cuts in the financing of other social services, are a major feature of most provincial budgets for the coming year.

The cutbacks manifest themselves in different forms in different provinces: tuition increases in the Prairies and the Atlantic, major layoffs and cuts in the number of courses and facilities in Ontario, a drop in education quality in British Columbia and differential fees for international students in Quebec.

Universities and colleges are faced with rising costs, and deal with them by either receiving continued support from the government, increasing students' tuition fees, or cutting back to reduce the costs.

Much of the problem is rooted in the federal-provincial cost sharing agreement for post-secondary education that ties federal spending to a percentage of personal income tax. If provinces are to maintain education and other social services in the face of rising costs, they must do so without any extra help from the federal budget, unless taxes rise.

When provinces allocate their own budget, the easiest cutbacks to institute are those in the social services. Government is not supporting universities trying to maintain education standards and accessibility—aid programs are inadequate, and grants per student are not keeping up with the rise in the price index.

Universities and colleges look next to tuition fee increases—tuition rose from 11.6 per cent of total operating income for Canadian universities in 75-76 to 13.5 per cent in 76-77.

Tuition increases are planned for all three Prairie provinces in the fall. In Alberta, a 10 per cent hike will follow a 25 per cent increase last year. Saskatchewan may index tuition to inflation, after increases of nine and ten per cent in the last two years. University of Manitoba students can expect their third increase in as many years.

Students in Ontario and B.C. faced 10 and 25 per cent increases respectively last year.

Atlantic students may face increases indexed to the cost of living

next year, and perhaps for each year in the next six.

The remaining option open to universities is cutting costs—cutting faculty and staff salaries, and numbers of courses and faculties offered, increasing class size, decreasing floor space, and cutting support services, like libraries, cafeterias and residences.

While universities and colleges in most provinces have had to trim in one place or another, Ontario and Manitoba institutions will face some of the more drastic cuts in the coming year.

In Manitoba, a tuition increase of as much as 18 per cent won't stop "traumatic" cuts at the University of Manitoba, according to its administration president. The university's 40 budgeting units have been asked to cut 1978-79 budgets to 97 per cent of present budgets, despite increases in costs of more than 15 per cent. And the university may have to eliminate some faculties or schools.

The Ontario government announced Feb. 20 grants that fall \$26 million short of the amount required "just to maintain the system" of universities in that province.

The provincial government decision ignored the recommendation of its own advisory body on post-secondary education, the Ontario Council on University Affairs, which recommended a 9.5 per cent increase rather than the final figure of 5.7 per cent.

The funding shortfall at the University of Toronto could mean a five per cent decline in the living standard of faculty and staff, larger classes, fewer courses and a slash in research projects. Many course cutbacks have already been announced.

At York University, 300 part-time faculty may be laid off to make up an estimated budget shortfall of \$4 million. Ryerson Polytechnical Institute will have to cut more than \$3 million, which could mean laying off as many as 90 full-time staff. The Ryerson administration recently instituted an 11 p.m. curfew to save operating monies.

At the Universities of Ottawa and Waterloo, residence rents are increasing 16 and 13.2 per cent respectively.

At Carleton University, the administration will restrict enrolment in five professional faculties to maintain academic standards and cope with space and staff shortages. Although the university's library is the worst in the province, cutbacks will reduce its \$4 million budget to \$3.6 million.

At the University of Windsor, courses will be dropped. At Trent University, there is a serious crowding problem.

The list goes on and on. The cutbacks are part of a drive on the part of the government to balance the provincial budget in four years, and Premier Bill Davis predicts "more difficult" times for the following year.

Students have reacted with a series of occupations at Trent, McMaster and Carleton Universities, and a mass demonstration of students, faculty, staff and some administrators is scheduled for March 16 at the provincial legislature.