

ent Input; WE MUST ACT NOW To Stop Tuition Increase

...ue centres of excellence."
 The Association cites the great proliferation of mediocre Asian studies programs as an example. It also feels that insufficient research into national needs takes place and that more and better research institutes should be created "with the support necessary to foster first-class achievements."
 But the association is believed to be afraid that any change the government makes now in a funding arrangement might cost the universities money, so Oliver is expected to ask Trudeau not to do anything major for the next two years.
 The brief will be discussed with Premier Campbell on January 22nd.

Higher Tuition?

Meanwhile, CAUT takes a harder stand, insisting that provincial governments be bypassed and funds be provided directly to the universities from Ottawa.

CAUT points out the problems of provincialization similar to the ones AUCC mentioned.

But CAUT in its brief goes beyond the request for direct federal aid for university operating expenses. It says students should be required to pay higher fees.

CAUT claims costs of running universities have increased greatly in recent years while tuition fees remain stable.

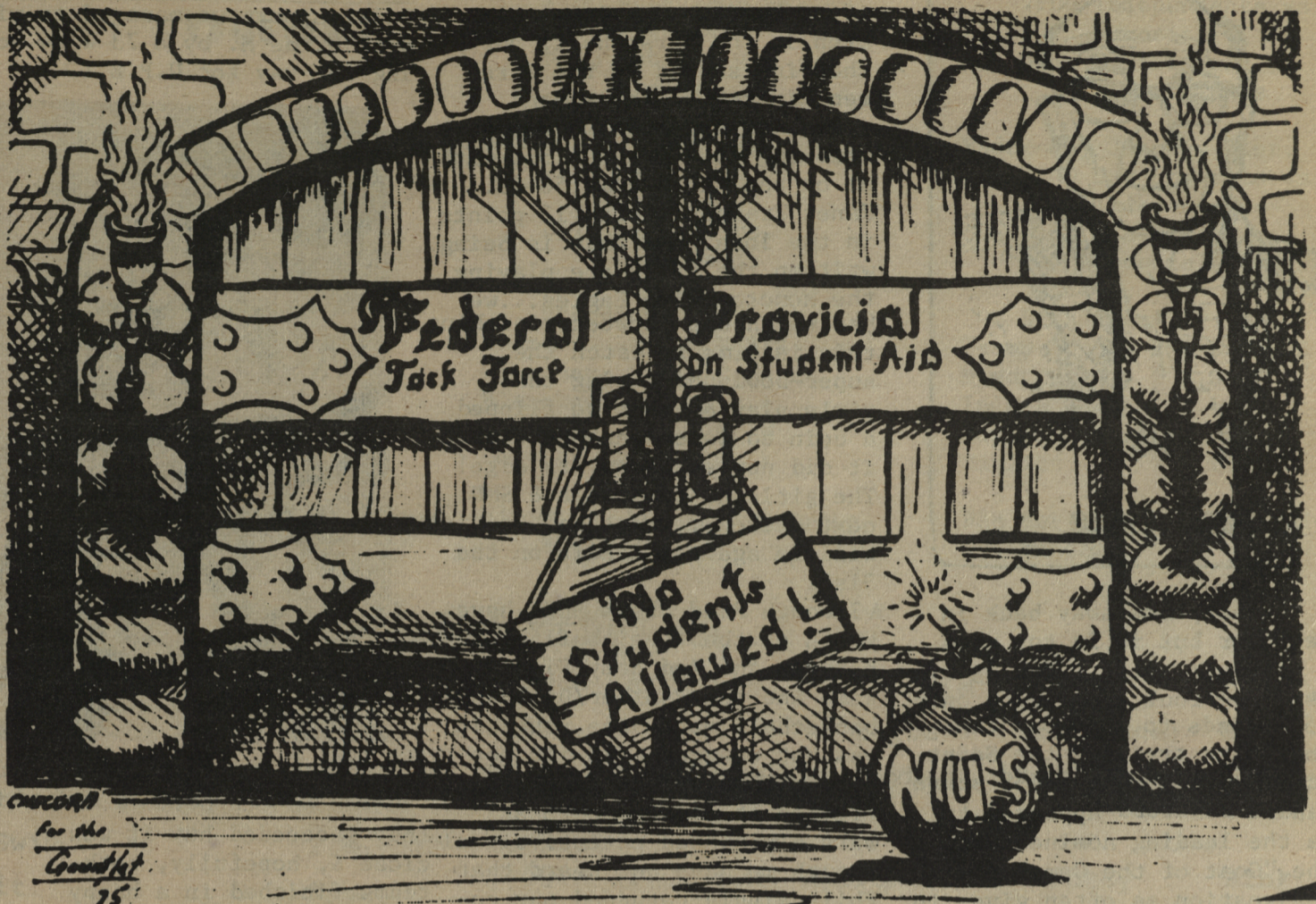
"We conclude that the fee component should, at a minimum remain stable in the mix of financial resources, and this implies annual cost-of-living adjustments to the fee component. To this extent, we support increased students fees..."

The CAUT position parallels that of a secretive federal-provincial task force on student aid, which has been working since June 1974 on a program to amend the Canada Student Loans Act.

The task force has been considering a large-scale change of the loan system, which would force students to pay a much greater percentage of their education costs, and repay the government with increased loan obligations.

Students have been excluded from participating directly in the task-force decision-making, even though they are the people who will be most affected by the decisions.

Students also are being excluded from the debate on the Fiscal Arrangements Act.



NUS:Policies Without Program

An official in the secretary of state department, which administers the act, said policy officials consider submissions from AUCC and CAUT important in forming their own recommendations to their minister, Hugh Faulkner.

He neglected to mention the National Union of Students.

When asked about the omission, the official noted that "NUS represents a lot less than 100 percent of students in Canada." He later clarified his remarks by saying NUS has made a submission to his department and that the submission is being considered.

NUS executive secretary Dan O'Connor admitted the organization hasn't pursued with maximum vigour its presentations on the Fiscal Arrangements Act, pointing out the organization's executive has been occupied with the student loan plan controversies.

O'Connor also said the person who was researching the fiscal arrangements issue and prepared recommendations for the fall NUS conference in Fredericton, is now in Argentina.

The NUS recommendations sent to the secretary of state department without detailed explanations, include the

organization's insistence that tuition fees be abolished.

NUS asks that "tuition fees not be considered part of the financial sources for post-secondary education and that the fiscal transfers be conditional on the abolition of tuition fees."

NUS also approved motions asking that all moneys granted to provinces through the act should be used for post-secondary education, and joined with CAUT and the AUCC is asking the 15 percent annual limit on funding increases be eliminated.

NUS also suggested that the present Fiscal Arrangements Act creates difficulties for poorer provinces. A spokesman stated that "since the federal government matches every provincial dollar, the richer provinces get more because they can afford to put up more themselves."

Further NUS says that the Act provides an incentive to the provinces to increase tuition fees. For each dollar of tuition the student pays, the government, under the Act, gives the provinces a dollar.

Uphill Battle With High Stakes

But NUS faces an uphill battle in getting its points across.

Both the AUCC and CAUT want

the federal government to take a greater role in post-secondary policy making. That is appealing to the federal government, which might see an opportunity to get some tangible political returns for the money it spends.

It may also result in a constitutional battle between the provincial and federal governments, since the British North America Act clearly specifies the provinces have jurisdiction over education.

But while the provinces and the federal government have the resources to press their self-interests, the position of students and the NUS is less than perfect.

The proposal by CAUT that students be required to pay greater tuition fees has obvious appeal to the provinces and federal government. The AUCC also is believed to support increased tuition fees, although it has not yet mustered the courage to state its opinion publicly.

And NUS so far has been unable to mobilize massive enough support to convince the federal and provincial bureaucrats, university administrators and teachers of the merits of its position.

It remains to be seen what that failure will mean for students' pocketbooks and accessibility to post-secondary education.