TUITION FEES. SENATE AND COUNCIL DECISIONS

This Bulletin Special has been published as soon as possible after the meetings of Senate and Council held in the last week of term. It includes detailed reports on the discussions at those meetings on tuition fees for next year.

As a result of decisions taken by Senate and Council, the fixing of fee levels is to be delayed in order to allow further time for concerted action by universities and staff and student unions, in an attempt to change Government policy. However if policy is not changed during the next two months then the University will adopt Planning Committee's recommendations that fees should be increased to new levels based on the advice given by Mrs. Shirley Williams last November.

The special Senate meeting on March 23 had been called, the Vice-Chancellor told those present, to enable Senate to have a fundamental discussion of the question of tuition fees in the light of national proposals to increase fees to a level which would raise University income from fees by approximately £15m, with a similar consequent reduction in income from the University Grants Committee recurrent grant.

The meeting, which was attended by just over 100 members of the Senate and Senate Committee, had also been called to consider, in the circumstances of such a fee increase, the University's provision of funds for fee waivers for those students in hardship.

The Vice-Chancellor went on to say that the Students' Union had been invited to submit a record of its recent discussions at General Meetings on the fees question, but had not produced such a paper. Nor had he received from the Students' Union any written confirmation of the basis for and aims of its most recent actions, including the occupation of Sussex House. However a background paper for information on resolutions on the fees question passed by the campus trades unions had been made available (for details see page 4).

The discussion which followed was centred on a motion from the President of the Students' Union, which in particular called on Senate to reject the tuition fee increase "advice" from the Government and refer it back to the Department of Education and Science - in effect, to freeze fees at their present levels.

This meeting gave Senate the opportunity to reconsider a policy which had far-reaching effects, which extended outside the University and which represented but one of a number of attacks on the higher education system generally, Mr. Lindsay Thomas, President of the Students' Union, said.

The increase proposed by the Government was not only a cut in the education budget, but was also designed to disadvantage selected groups in relation to access to higher education, he said. It was vital that the University should give concrete expression to its opposition to fee increases, and that belief had given rise both to the present motion and to the recent occupation of Sussex House.

The motion was not designed in order to deprive the University of £15m but to persuade the Government, through a collective action by all universities, to change its mind. "If a united effort, so far unprecedented, could be realisied, this aim is a realistic one," Mr. Thomas said.

Several points of information were clarified in the discussion:

- the basis for the calculation of the saving of £15m to be made in education in 1977-78 was not publicly known; but the Secretary of State had confirmed that if tuition fees were not increased, the savings would have to come from elsewhere in the higher and further education budget;

- the University's recurrent grant for 1977-78 would not be delayed as a result of delay in fixing fee levels. The grant would be calculated on the assumption that the University had implemented higher fee levels;

- the University had no contractual obligation to students in course not to increase fees from year to year;

- a freeze of fee levels would mean that the real value of fee income would unavoidably decline, and that the level of fees would be reduced in real terms by inflation; and

- some universities had responded to the University of Bradford Senate's initiative in a positive way, others in a negative way; some had agreed with the notion of a conference provided it took place in London. Neither Bradford nor Warwick Universities had decided to freeze their fees;

- the income foregone by a freeze in fees would be sufficient to finance about 400 jobs;

- it was Council's responsibility to determine fee levels after consultation with Senate.

The likelihood of the Government changing its policy as a result of pressure from universities was considered in the discussion. Comments ranged from the view that there was no likelihood whatever of a change of policy, to the suggestion that the passing of the motion would represent a collective action and a valuable precedent for future years in which even more acute cuts might have to be opposed. Some members felt, however, that given the relative mildness of the cuts in higher education expenditure, and the poor credibility of the universities in public opinion generally, opposition would be an irresponsible and futile political gesture.

The practical consequences of a delay in deciding fee levels would cause increased distress and uncertainty for present and intending students, it was said. Also, decisions on budgets could not be taken and needlessly complex and extra contingency planning would have to take place.

Other comments included:

- the most realistic and responsible course would be to recognise the continued on page 2
inevitability of higher fees and concentrate attention on provision for fee waivers to alleviate hardship and on means of ascertaining reliably the extent of hardship;

* some members felt the Government’s policy on tuition fees represented a new policy on access to higher education. Others doubted this and saw it solely as a means of saving public expenditure;

* agreement was probably unanimous that the increased fee levels were being introduced too suddenly and in such a way as to imperil the completion of courses by some current students. But the case in itself for higher fees was a different matter and one with considerable merits. It was reasonable for the Government to try to secure the educational opportunities for U.K. citizens even if at the relative expense of overseas students. Even with the higher fees, British education remained a good investment, especially for those countries with currencies which had appreciated relative to the pound;

* Senate should take full account of the restrictions on access to higher education and of the difficulties in the negotiation of foreign exchange opportunities to which higher fees would lead;

* the Students’ Union was not irremediably opposed to higher fees. If it became absolutely certain that no change of Government policy was possible, the Students’ Union would then wish to reconsider the matter and to weigh a decision on fee levels against alternative means of cutting back on the University’s budget.

It became clear during the discussion that many members supported a "middle ground" position proposed by Mr. A.J. Bailey, Chairman of Education. He suggested that three alternatives were open to Senate: 1) to recommend that fees should be frozen; 2) implement fees but take the protest to a national level; or 3) a "middle ground" amendment to the motion from the President of the Students’ Union.

This would involve delaying a decision on fee levels despite the inconvenience to individuals in order to maximise the political pressure which could then be brought to bear upon the Government to change its policy. Such a course of action would denote a unity of purpose without committing the University either the loss of film income or to the proposed level of fees, and would enable the University to respond meaningfully to the initiative from Bradford and supported by the University of Warwick.

After discussion on the order of voting and a number of amendments to the Students’ Union motion, the substantive motion (see page 3) was voted upon and approved, with 54 votes in favour and 17 against. This included the deletion of "to reject the tuition fee increase 'advice' from the Government and to refer the 'advice' back to the DES", and the substitution of the "middle ground" amendment, "to seek further discussions with the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals, University Grants Committee, and the Department of Education and Science on the Government’s advice on increases in tuition fees, and to request Council to delay the fixing of fee levels for 1977-78'.

Peak waivers

Senate then turned to the consideration of fee waivers. The Vice-Chancellor said that he hoped that Senate would approve the spirit of Planning Committee’s recommendations on fee waivers, which implied a fund of more or less than £90,000 depending on the fee levels finally agreed and the effective incidence of hardship.

In response, the President of the Students’ Union opposed the establishment of a fund and related procedures for fee waivers. Such proposals were inconsistent with the Students’ Union position on fee increases, he said. If high fee levels were finally to be introduced, the Students’ Union would wish to bring forward significant criticisms of the proposals as they stood.

A motion was proposed and later voted upon and approved by 50 votes in favour to 15 against, that "Without attempting to weaken the resolve of the Senate’s resolution in tuition fees, Counselling Services and the Administration should make contingency plans to deal with hardship along the lines proposed by the Planning Committee."

The following factors were mentioned in discussion of this motion:

* in favour:
- the need to have authoritative information on the extent of actual hardship, though the Registrar and Secretary had pointed out that the Senate's decision to leave open the question of fee levels would prevent full collection of authoritative information since some students would not respond to questionnaires whilst holding the assumption that fees might not be increased;
- the need for the Council to be apprised of this need and for it to make the funds available.

* against the motion:
- the acceptance of fee increases implied by the motion;
- the short-term nature of the solution which fee waivers represented;
- the inability of other smaller institutions to adopt adequate fee waivers schemes.

Two days after Senate called for a delay in the fixing of tuition fee levels, Council at its meeting on March 25 agreed to a delay — by deciding to accept the new levels from June 1 unless Government policy had changed by that date.

The resolution adopted by Council was: "This Council accepts with reluctance the necessity of increasing tuition fees for 1977-78 to the levels recommended by the Planning Committee from June 1, 1977, if Government policy on tuition fee levels has not by then changed."

The levels recommended by Planning Committee are based on the rates laid down by the Government, which are taken into account in assessing the grants available from the University Grants Committee. (They are set out on page 3.)

Council regretted the Government's action in seeking to impose its pro posed new high level of fees, and at such short notice, but it could not responsibly take any steps which might lose the University much-needed income or which might mislead current and intending students about the level of fees, it was said earlier in the meeting.

It was also suggested that although Council should not wish to diminish the chances of success of a concerted effort with other universities to change Government policy, the chances of obtaining this concerted action were not high since most universities had already fixed their fees for 1977-78 at the higher levels.

Council wished to be as generous as possible in the provision of adequate funds to relieve hardship, but it could continued on page 3
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not contemplate staff redundancies and other financial consequences which would result from fees lower than those recommended by Planning Committee.
Council agreed that £60,000 should be made available from 1977-78's recurrent income for fee waivers for current students in 1977-78. This was on the understanding that should this sum prove insufficient to stop some students from having to terminate their courses prematurely solely on account of the increases, if implemented, then more money might be requested.

Recommended tuition fees for the academic year 1977-78 (1976-77 fees in brackets):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>FULL-TIME</th>
<th>PART-TIME</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Home</td>
<td>Overseas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BA (other than Affiliated Institutions &amp; Year Abroad)</td>
<td>510(189)</td>
<td>660(417)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BSc</td>
<td>140(52)</td>
<td>140(52)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BA (Year Abroad)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LLB, PGCE, MA (other than CDHE &amp; CDS), MEd Psych, MSW, MSC (other than OR), Research, MPhil, PhD (other than Dev. Studies)</td>
<td>780(210)</td>
<td>880(435)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MA in CDHE and CDS</td>
<td>880(385)</td>
<td>980(610)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MSC for staff of RGO</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MSC in OR</td>
<td>1500(1250)</td>
<td>1500(1250)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- per term</td>
<td>600(500)</td>
<td>600(500)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MPhil in Development Studies</td>
<td>1500(1036)</td>
<td>1500(1036)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of which the Univ. receives</td>
<td>315</td>
<td>315</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research, MPhil, PhD at IMS</td>
<td>780(750)</td>
<td>880(750)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of which Univ. receives</td>
<td>680(650)</td>
<td>780(650)</td>
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Other fees
D.Litt., DSc examination fee 100(100)
Continuation fee of all awards 30(25)

Notes:
(a) Each full-time student is liable to pay the Students' Union fee in addition to the appropriate tuition fee above.
(b) The MSc course in Ion Implementation and Radiation Effects in Materials is excluded because it will probably be discontinued after 1976-77.
(c) Fees for Certificate in Education, Initial and In-Service B.Ed. (other than part-time for Croydon teachers), and awards in Affiliated Institutions are excluded as they are subject to separate national or local agreements.
(d) The fee for the In-Service B.Ed. course for Croydon teachers which is a logistic course taught solely by University faculty, is under negotiation.

1. The Senate notes:
(a) the proposed Tuition Fee Increases;
(b) the opposition expressed by the Students' Union, AUT, NUPE, NALGO and ASTMS to these proposed fee increases;
(c) the Area Demonstration on Friday, March 18, in opposition to the proposed fee increases;
(d) the Bradford University Senate's invitation to this Senate to send representatives to their meeting on the tuition fee increases.

2. As a University Senate we deplore the very high increase in fees proposed by the Government for introduction in the Academic Session 1977-78, and consider this will have a highly deleterious effect on the universities and create hardship to students.

3. The Senate accordingly resolves:
(a) to seek further discussions with the CVCP, UGC, and DES on the Government's advice on increases in tuition fees, and to request Council to delay the fixing of fee-levels for 1977-78;
(b) to state publicly opposition to proposed fee increases, through local and national media;
(c) to seek the support of other universities to promote a united front to the Government;
(d) to contact local M.P.'s, Councillors, Local Education Authorities and other universities with the resolution of this Senate;
(e) that this Senate accepts the invitation from the Senate of the University of Bradford to the joint conference of University Senates to give consideration to what further action should be taken over the fee increases.

The representatives would include the Vice-Chancellor and if possible two faculty and two student members of the Senate committee.

6. that this Senate calls for a Day of University discussions on access to and financing of higher education when all those involved in the University, staff, faculty and students will be encouraged and enabled to attend such discussions; local M.P.'s and councillors and other interested parties should be invited to attend.

With regard to para. 3(5) of the motion, it was agreed that the Vice-Chancellor should himself determine which faculty members should attend the conference.
CAMPUS UNION RESOLUTIONS

At its meeting, Senate received a paper which set out the resolutions passed by campus trade unions concerning tuition fees and the occupation of Sussex House. These resolutions are repeated below, although for purposes of this article, resolutions or clauses relating to or commenting on the occupation of Sussex House have been omitted from the text, in order to concentrate upon the unions' expressed positions on the government's recommendations on tuition fees.

1. Following a meeting of the Joint Union Liaison Committee held on February 2, 1977, the following joint statement was issued and distributed by the Students' Union to some members of staff on March 2, 1977:

"The undersigned Unions wish to bring to your attention their concern with the impact of the increase in student tuition fees and their support for the Campaign to be undertaken over the next two weeks by the University of Sussex Union. Whilst calling for your full support, the Unions have informed the U.S.U. that they do not necessarily support 'direct action'.

The fee increases are:

Home Overseas
BA & BSc £510 (£189) £660 (£241)
MA, LLD, £780 (£210) £885 (£435)
PhD, MEd, MSc (other than ORS)
M.Phil & D.Phil.
(with some differences in minor categories)

If the fee increases are implemented, they will bias university student intake against self-financed students unless they have substantial private means.

The impact will be immediately felt by some 320 students currently taking courses at this University. It will also have implications for all staff in the University, inasmuch as the potential reduction in student numbers, and the wider effects of the cuts in public expenditure, would lead to further reductions in staff in all unions at this University and the creation of "redundancy posts".

We urge your support.

The statement was signed by Officers of the Joint Unions of AUT, NAfGO, NUPE and ASTMS, and the President of the University of Sussex Students' Union.

2. Association of University Teachers (AUT)

At the reconvened Emergency General Meeting of the AUT on March 9, 1977, the following motions were passed:

A. "This meeting deplores that the common interest which all members of the University have in effective action to fight the increase in fees is in danger of being obscured by recent events on campus. 

...it considers that the way forward lies through negotiation and a clear initiative from the University on the fees campaign.

Accordingly, it authorises the AUT Executive Committee to take the following steps:

1) To request the Vice-Chancellor to convene an emergency meeting of Senate;

2) To initiate discussion with other Unions on campus with a view to promoting joint action for the implementation of national AUT policy in opposition to the fees increase."

3. National Association of Local Government Officers (NALGO)

At an Emergency General Meeting held on March 8, 1977, the following motion was passed by the members present:

..."University of Sussex branch of NALGO urges the Vice-Chancellor to take immediate action to grant automatic fee increase waivers to all self-financing students in mid-course."

4. Association of Scientific, Technical and Managerial Staff (ASTMS)

An Emergency Branch Meeting of ASTMS on Thursday, March 10, 1977, passed the following resolution:

1) This Branch supports the National-wide campaign against the proposed increases for tuition fees for higher and further education;

2) This Branch supports the demand of the Sussex Students' Union for the government to immediately freeze tuition fees and calls on the University to refuse to implement the proposed fee increases and quotas."

5. National Union of Public Employees (NUPE)

An Emergency Branch Meeting held on March 8, 1977, did not pass any formal resolutions, but following the meeting the Branch Secretary issued a statement to the Vice-Chancellor:

"NUPE Sussex University Branch... notes that the proposed fee increases (along with public expenditure cuts generally) will mean further reductions in jobs for NUPE members, whether by 'natural wastage' or otherwise. NUPE therefore proposes that the Vice-Chancellor call a one-day closure of the University (as at Essex) to show the University Community's opposition to government policy, thus to increase the possibility of improving the local situation."

6. After the occupation had ended on March 15, 1977, a meeting of the Campus Unions with the Vice-Chancellor on March 16, 1977, received a formal request from the Joint Union Liaison Committee that its view that the University should accept the Bradford conference invitation be reported to Senate.