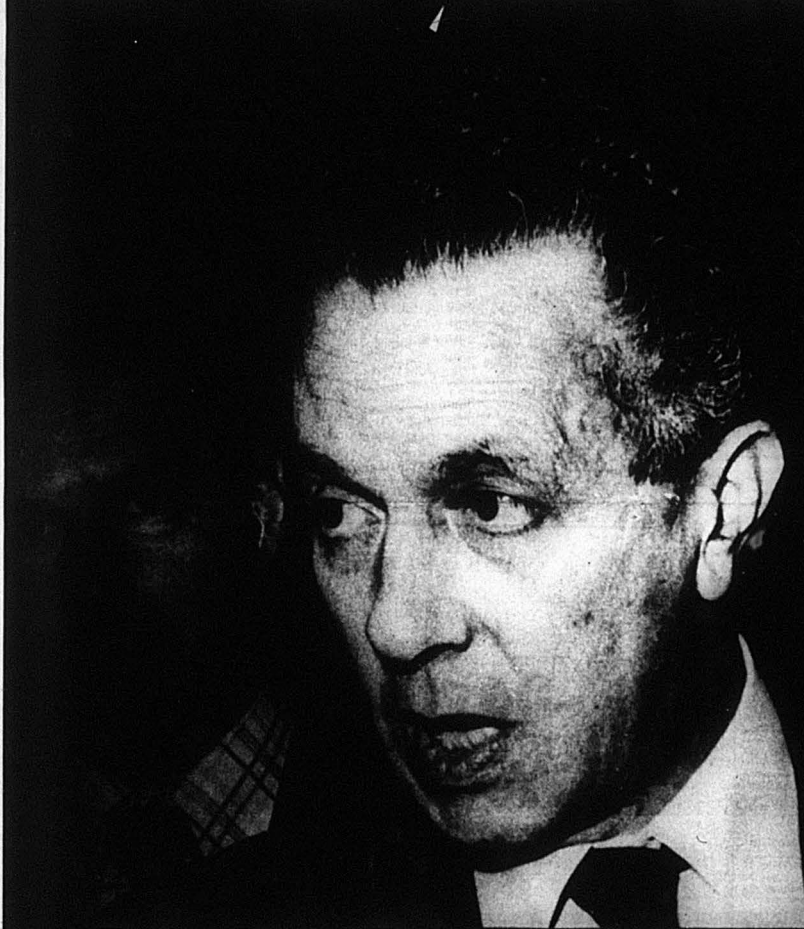


STUDENT

Special **Free** Grant Supplement

We've won one battle



...but the war goes on

COMMENT

For an issue of *Student* to appear in the tenth week of term — in whatever form — is an extraordinary event in itself. But at the risk of sounding clichéd, these are extraordinary times, and *Student* feels duty-bound to continue its efforts to keep the Edinburgh University community fully informed concerning the current grants crisis.

Many students may be under the impression that Sir Keith Joseph's abandonment of tuition fees last Wednesday signified victory for the recent grants campaign. It did not. Essentially, Sir Keith Joseph remains unpersuaded of students' worsening plight, and the withdrawal of tuition fees was nothing more than an act of

appeasement, a face saving compromise designed to mollify Tory backbenchers besieged by sackfuls of letters.

Sad to say, those thousands of letters written by students and their parents before last week are now redundant. The minimum grant will still disappear, and combined with the paltry 3% rise in the grant as a whole, that change must still mean increased financial hardship for many students next year.

The letter writing campaign *must* — inescapably, inevitably — start all over again. Once again it must be borne in upon the Government that while they calmly endeavour to balance their books in preparation for £1,500 million of tax cuts next

spring, their actions will place an intolerable strain upon students as, ironically, they too seek to juggle with debits and credits — figures the magnitude of which is a mere spit in the ocean to the Treasury.

We have won one battle. The next will be even more demanding, but it too must be won. And it can be won if we remain as determined and united in the months ahead as we have done so far. Mrs Thatcher is fond of quoting Winston Churchill; perhaps one of her quotations can provide us with our motto for the rest of the campaign. If defeat will mean penury for British students, then surely defeat, as the Prime Minister might put it, is unthinkable.

GRANTS NEWS

Joseph turns tail over tuition

To sounds of cheering from his own backbenchers, and cries of derision from the Opposition, Sir Keith Joseph told the House of Commons last Wednesday that he was going to scrap his plan to introduce tuition fees for students with well-off parents.

However, his plan to abolish the minimum grant remains intact, and Sir Keith told the Commons that he would initiate an extensive review of financial support for students next year — which might include a system of loans to replace at least partially the current award of grants.

In what amounts to the biggest government U-turn since Mrs Thatcher said she was not for turning, Sir Keith told the Commons, "I recognise the concern expressed in this House and elsewhere that the increase in parental contribution that was proposed was too sharp and the notice given too short to enable parents to make such a substantial adjustment in their financial affairs."

Sir Keith said in his statement that the cost of his concessions, brought about by almost 200 rebel Conservative backbenchers,

would be £21 million. Half of this would come from savings from other aspects of the education budget, particularly scientific research, and half would be financed by the Treasury.

One of the two ringleaders of the Tory rebellion, Mr Harry Greenway, said he would have preferred the whole of the £21 million concession to have come from the Treasury, and accused Sir Keith of "financial nit-picking". However, he agreed to withdraw the rebel motions of *pro*, *st*.

Labour's Shadow Education Secretary, Mr Giles Radice, accused Sir Keith of making a "humiliating climbdown" and went on to tell the rebel Conservatives that he would take them seriously when they rebelled over unemployment, the NHS, "and other issues of major concern in this country".

Speaking in his capacity as Liberal Party Leader, Edinburgh University Rector, Mr David Steel, told Sir Keith that he was "messing around" trying to find sums of £1 million when the Chancellor of the Exchequer was keeping £1,500 million in reserve for tax cuts.

Alan Young

There appears below a list of the Tory MPs whose concern caused tuition fees to be revoked. These backbenchers have succumbed to pressure once already, and may — though less willingly — do so again. If your MP is among them, write immediately and make clear your dissatisfaction with last week's compromise.

"D. Bate (Elmet), A. Beaumont-Dark (Selby), G. Oak, H. Beilngiem (Norfolk NW), V. Bendall (Ifford N), W. Benyon (Milton Keynes), D. G. Bevan (Yarley), Sir John Biggs-Davison (Epping Forest), Dr J. G. Blackburn (Dorset West), Sir Peter Blaker (Blackpool S), Sir Nicholas Bonser (Upminster), Mrs Y. Bottomley (SW Surrey), G. Bowden (Dulwich), Sir Bernard Braine (Castle Point), M. Brown (Brixton and Croydon), P. Brunvels (Leicester E), Sir Paul Bryan (Bosworth), A. Burt (Bury N), J. V. Butler (Bournemouth W), J. Carls (Luton N), M. R. Carr (St Yvonne), S. Chapman (Chipping Barnet), Dr M. Clark (Rochford), D. Conway (Shrewsbury), P. Cormack (Staffordshire S), G. Dicks (Hayes), G. Dickens (Litchborough), S. Dorrell (Loughborough), A. Dykes (Harrow E), D. Ewenet (Erit), Sir Reginald Eyre (Hall Green).

M. Fallon (Darlington), Miss J. Fookes (Plymouth Drake), N. Forman (Carlisle), M. Forsyth (Stirling), J. Fox (Shipley), C. Franks (Barrow), R. Freeman (Kettering), R. Galloway (Hull East), G. Gardiner (Regent), Dr A. Glyn (Windsor), Sir Philip Goodhart (Beckenham), J. Gorst (Widmore), Sir Anthony Grant (Cambs SW), E. Griffiths (Bury St Edmunds), I. Grist (Cardiff C), P. Ground (Felltham).

N. Hamilton (Tatton), Dr K. Hampson (Leeds NW), J. Hanley (Richmond), J. Hannan (Leeds), C. Hawkins (High Peak), J. Hayes (Harrow), D. Heathcoat-Amory (Wilt), J. Heddle (Staffs Mid), R. Hicks (Cornwall SE), R. Hickmet (Gloucester and Stroud), S. Higgins (Worthing), S. Hill (Southampton Test), K. Hind (Lancs W), G. Howarth (Cannock), R. Holt (Lancashire), D. Hogg (Grantham), P. Hubbard-Miles (Bridgend), J. Hunt (Ravensbourne).

C. Irving (Cheltenham), T. Jessel (Twickenham), Sir G. Johnson Smith (Reading), R. Jones (Herts W), Mrs E. Kelleth-Bowman (Lancaster), Sir A. Kershaw (Stroud), R. King (Northfield), Mrs J. Knight (Edgworth), D. Knox (S. Moorlands), M. Latham (Rutland), G. Lawler (Bradford N), I. Lawrence (Burton), J. Lester (Bristol), K. Lewis (Stafford), I. Lloyd (Havant).

A. Mackay (Berks E), A. McQuarrie (Banff and

Buchan), G. Malone (Aberdeen S), T. Marlow (Northampton N), M. Mates (Hants E), R. Maxwell-Hyslop (Tiverton), P. Merchant (Newcastle upon Tyne C), P. Mills (Devon W), N. Maccampbell (Blackpool N), Sir Hector Monro (Dumfries), F. Montgomery (Aldridge), M. Morris (Northampton S), C. Morrison (Devizes), G. Neale (Cornwall N), P. Oppenheim (Amber Valley), J. Page (Harrow W), M. Parris (Derbyshire W), Mrs E. Peacock (Bates), J. Powley (Norwich S), Sir David Price (Eastleigh), K. Rafter (Delyn), G. Rippon (Hertford), A. Rowe (Mid Kent), T. Sackville (Bolton W), C. Shepherd (Harrow), R. Shepherd (Aldridge), M. Shersby (Upbridge), F. Shevester (Wokingham), T. Smith (Beaconsfield), T. Speller (Devon N), J. Spence (Ryedale), R. Squire (Hornchurch), I. Stanbrook (Oxford), A. Steen (S. Hants), L. Stevens (Nuneaton), A. Stewart (Shrewsbury), D. Sunberg (Bury S), P. Temple-Morris (Leominster), P. Thomas (Hendon S), P. Thompson (Norwich N), N. Thorne (Ifford S), M. Thornton (Crosby), J. Townd (Bridlington), C. Townsend (Berkley), Dr I. Twinn (Edmonton).

W. Walker (Tayside N), D. Walters (Westbury), K. Warren (Hastings), C. Watson (Skipton), J. Watts (Slough), B. Wells (Hertford), J. Wheeler (Westminster N), J. Wiggins (Weston super Mare), Sir Brandon Rhyx Williams (Kennington), Mrs A. Winterton (Completon), N. Winterton (Macclesfield), T. Wood (Stevenage), M. Woodcock (Epsom), Others: D. Lambie (Lab. Cunningham), S. P. Ashdown (Lib. Yeovil), R. Wainwright (Lib. Colne Valley), K. Maginnis (OUP, Fermanagh), Rev. M. Smyth (OUP, Belfast S), A. Walker (OUP, Belfast N).

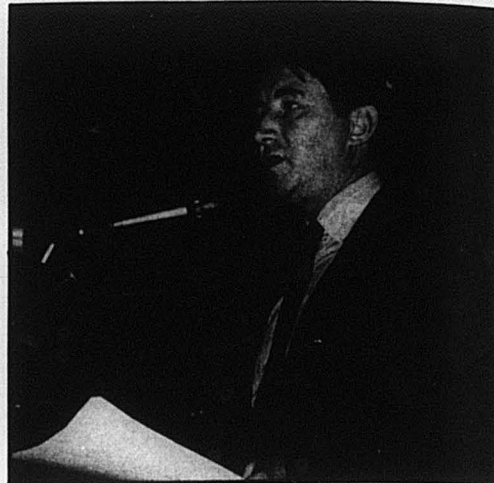
The 14 Conservatives who have backed motion 161 but not motion 162 are: D. Amess (Basildon), Dover (Chorley), P. Fry (Wellingborough), H. Greenway (Eating N), D. Harris (St. Ives), R. Key (Salisbury), Sir Anthony Meyer (Clwyd NW), T. Rathbone (Lewes), D. Smith (Warwick), T. Taylor (Southend E), P. Thurnham (Bolton NE), G. Walter (Keighley), M. Wolfson (Sevenoaks), T. Yeo (Suffolk S).

Steel strikes hard at Sir Keith

"The battle is by no means over," was the message given by David Steel to students in the main library last Friday afternoon. The basement coffee room was packed out to hear him speak, although many may only have been there because it was Friday afternoon. Perhaps more importantly, Steel attracted a number of press photographers, bringing with them the hope of some outside publicity for the library work-in and illustrating the importance of having a national figure as Rector (a point perhaps to be borne in mind in the rectorial election next term).

In his speech, Steel put his full support behind the students' case against the grant cuts. He was encouraged by Sir Keith Joseph's partial U-turn last week, saying "this is the first time that a decision announced by the Government has been reversed as a result of pressure being put on MPs", but he stressed the importance of continuing to write to individual MPs and Ministers, which in his view was a far more effective form of action than rallies and demonstrations.

Scottish universities would be hit hardest, he said, because the level of parental contributions would be such as to make four-year courses much less attractive to parents than three-year equivalents in England. Scots would also be disadvantaged because they came from a wider range of income groups than English students, and would therefore be more affected by the increased contributions.



David Steel slams the Government solution to the grants crisis.

Photo by John Lindsay

He poured scorn on the idea of student loans because experience in other countries had shown that they were unworkable and led to a high rate of drop-out and defaults on the loans. He also refuted the argument which Sir Keith has been wont to use, that Britain has a very generous system of grants, claiming that he had ignored the differences in incomes between countries: "taken as a percentage of real income, parental contributions in Germany, Japan and the

US are less than in Britain"

Taking a wider political view, Steel said that while the Government was cheese-paring in some areas, such as education, it was not cutting back on programmes such as Trident or on their plans for huge tax cuts next year. "This Government is making a sustained attack on education, and I think the whole question of their priorities is mistaken."

Robin Henry

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GRANTS NEWS

Poorest undergraduates for a generation

Undergraduates in the coming academic year are going to be the poorest for a generation. This is the bitter reality of Sir Keith Joseph's statement last week when the harsh truths about the already inadequate maintenance grants are considered.

Angus Erskine, EUSA Education and Welfare Adviser, spoke at length to *Student* this week about the likely implications of the cuts for an already hard-squeezed student population. "Education," he said, "is a right and by principle should be free. This is a fundamental policy which has been part of the education system for the past thirty years, something which has always been met from general taxation and should be maintained."

In explaining how hard many students will be hit, Mr Erskine pointed out that *already* half of all students do not receive the full parental contribution. The average student now has less than £9 disposable income per week, and the erosion in the value of the grant since the present government took office is equal to nine weeks' disposable income for the average student.

Already over a quarter of all undergraduates have overdrafts — and the vast majority of students will have had one by the time they leave college or university.

According to Mr Erskine, the most worrying aspect of the government's proposed cuts is the dramatic increase in the expected level of parental contribution. Mr Erskine gave *Student* the relevant

Parental Contribution Changes 1984-1986		
Residual Income	1984/85	1985/86
7,100	—	—
7,600	—	—
8,100	20	—
9,000	91	20
9,700	220	148
10,000	320	248
10,300	370	291
11,000	420	334
12,000	536	474
14,000	703	674
14,300	1,036	1,074
15,000	1,086	1,134
15,000	1,203	1,274
18,000	1,703	2,024
20,000	2,036	2,524

figures and pointed out how unreasonable it is to expect a 22 or 23-year-old adult still to be reliant on his parents for so long.

One of the fundamental principles of university education is the idea of independence; "there shouldn't be any duty for the parent to have to pay anything. The policies of this administration have generally been to strengthen the family, but cuts like these are bound to work in the opposite direction. They create an unnecessary dependence of young adults on their parents."

The cuts are bound to affect students with parents in the middle to upper income brackets particularly. Parents with a combined income of £13,000 or above will be paying considerably more than last year. Although the token concession of not having to pay tuition fees has been made — effectively as a result of university pressure who resented the increased administrative problems — there has been no change in the proposed maintenance grant cuts.

Mr Erskine pointed out that a loans system would be simply

unrealistic with the level of wage rates in Britain one of the lowest in western Europe. The combined average salary of a couple of primary teachers is only about £15,000 so what incentive would potential undergraduates have to enter this line of employment if they had perhaps an £8-£10,000 debt hanging over them.

The standard of higher education in Britain is one of the best in the world. This is being continually threatened by the present government, from all angles, and their increased financial pressures on students are bound to make potential and actual students think seriously about continuing education. In France, where they have a long-standing loans system, the drop-out rate is a staggering 60%. This is the real danger which faces Britain if something is not done to reverse next year's proposed cuts. Angus Erskine is convinced student protests have already had an effect in influencing Sir Keith Joseph's U-turn. For the future of further education in Britain, this pressure must be maintained.

Devin Scoble

EUSA Senior President John Mannix opens the second front.

Into the New Year....

Last week saw Sir Keith's climb-down over his proposal to impose the parental contribution towards tuition fees. Will it also, perhaps, see the Students' Association's climb-down over its grants campaign? The answer is quite clearly "No!" At the moment we haven't won anything. Sir Keith did not climb down, we simply stopped him climbing a bit higher. We still have no minimum grant and that means that failure to pay parental contribution, by those who are graded for full-cost maintenance, will mean exclusion from university for their child. Even if your fees are paid, if you get absolutely no maintenance payment, then you still have no real choice of university education. The argument for a minimum grant is ultimately the same as for full-cost tuition fees.

No doubt elsewhere in this supplement you will be reminded of the rest of the grants situation, i.e. they're smaller again etc. but for now let's move to what we're going to do about it. Well, what we're *not* going to do is "Smash the Tory Butchers Before They Smash Us" etc., although we may well vote them out at the next election. It is going to be more difficult this time because those naughty backbenchers probably won't be so ready to push their luck further on grants. Also, there is bound to be some public reaction to a continuing campaign along the lines of "What more do these bloody students want? Don't they know when they are well off?" However, I have spoken to several MPs about what action will have most effect and if that effect is worth the effort and the emphasis seems to be much as we've always said. Personal letters to MPs have got to continue, they have got to come from all students and all parents of students, they have got to come from all over the country and they have got to keep coming. Only that way can we hope to continue the climb-down we have started.

The letters themselves must now be different. Rather than just short angry letters containing personal evidence, they have got



to be longer, better informed and containing arguments formed from wider options. We must, for instance, apply ourselves fully to the question of loans. If you feel that loans are a good idea, and I know there are people here who definitely do, then you must speak out and say so, otherwise our discussion of the issue will ultimately be shallow and unconvincing because it has been formulated without constructive opposition. Everyone is talking about loans at the moment (that's probably the major victory Sir Keith has scored); we have to know this subject better than anyone else and show that we do.

The Students' Association Campaign will restart next term at grants' collection in the first week. Everyone will be given information sheets including letters summaries. This is firstly to remind everyone that the issue is still with us, remind everyone what has to be done and hopefully help everyone do it. SRC National Affairs Committee will meet in the first week to organise the subsequent action. Until then, don't wait until you're too tired from festivities to write, find out who you MP is as soon as you get home and write straight away.

Have a good Christmas. God bless.

CHRISTMAS

1984

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GRANT'S NEWS

Solid support for library work-in

Last Friday's speech by Rector David Steel was perhaps the high point of a library work-in which even the sleeping hours of some of the occupants was a valid contribution. Mr Steel's speech came nearly 43 hours into the 52-hour vigil, and was just one of several contributions to the grants debate which took place in the library coffee-room.

On Wednesday night students were addressed by the President of NUS Scotland, Alan Smart, in the wake of Sir Keith Joseph's announcement of the withdrawal of his plan for tuition fees, and the reawakening of the loans scheme debate, a possibility which was adamantly rejected by Mr Smart last week.

The following evening Mr John Duffy, branch secretary of the Association of University Teachers and an Edinburgh University lecturer himself, delivered a broadside upon the government's overall education strategy, attacking not only the still-scheduled abolition of the minimum grant, but also denouncing the cuts in education expenditure as a whole. Mr Duffy also made specific reference to the unhappy prospect of student loans, pointing not only to the currently alarming graduate unemployment rate, but also to the larger number of graduates who enter the teaching profession, and



Sleep catches up with the library protesters.

Photo by John Lindsay

who are also, as the current EIS action has endeavoured to illustrate, in an unenviable financial situation.

The work-in closed with a discussion of the issues themselves, led by Union President Hilary O'Neill and SRC National Affairs representative Robbie Foy. Despite the doubts which had surrounded the work-in in advance, it again appears to have proved a useful tactic, causing little disruption and remaining orderly throughout. As on the previous occasion when a library work-in took place, some students

were happy merely to use the opportunity to do some much needed revision, but nevertheless, the sheer numbers of students who packed the reading rooms and cafeteria after the final bell each night contributed to an impressive display of unity and commitment. The weight of this late-term protest, which took place after the abandonment of tuition fees last Wednesday afternoon, may provide a healthy indication of the embarrassment which Sir Keith Joseph is still to suffer.

Iain Cameron

Rally keeps up Scottish momentum

The initial flurry of publicity is already dying down — such is the nature of the media. Certainly, there were fewer students at last Wednesday's central Scottish rally against the cuts in Edinburgh that would have been expected even a week earlier.

Perhaps the previous week's London rally had raised my hopes too high as I arrived in the Grassmarket in time to see the looming spectre of student apathy ready to spring from the shadows. By Edinburgh standards, the turnout wasn't bad. But "not bad" isn't good enough. Maybe it was too close to the end of term, too close to exams, too many other things to worry about. This isn't a fight that can be won by talking about it over coffee in the library basement.

Yet there was evidence of some commitment from those present — representatives of colleges and universities from Paisley to Aberdeen. There were complaints from some of lack of publicity. Not from the police this time, who knew well in advance and kept a fairly low profile as the march wended its way up to the High Street and down the Mound.

There was a token sit-down on Princes Street outside the North British Hotel. The more militant members of the march felt this wasn't enough and attempted a similar action on the roundabout outside the Playhouse, the eventual destination. Rally stewards trying to move people were greeted with cries of "What's your middle name? Joseph?"

Numbers had increased to about 2,500 by now — a good sign. Students filed into the Playhouse, folding banners furiously. "Hope it's a good gig," said a voice nearby, echoing my own thoughts.

Divisions became apparent in the audience as the afternoon wore on and the BBC camera crew couldn't decide whether to stay or go. The NUM speaker, unfortunately not on the O'Neill level of word manipulation, split off the left, who were eager to hear his every word, from everybody else. If this is any indication of future trends, our case is bound to founder. As Scottish NUS President Alan Smart put it, "United we stand, we win. But divided..."

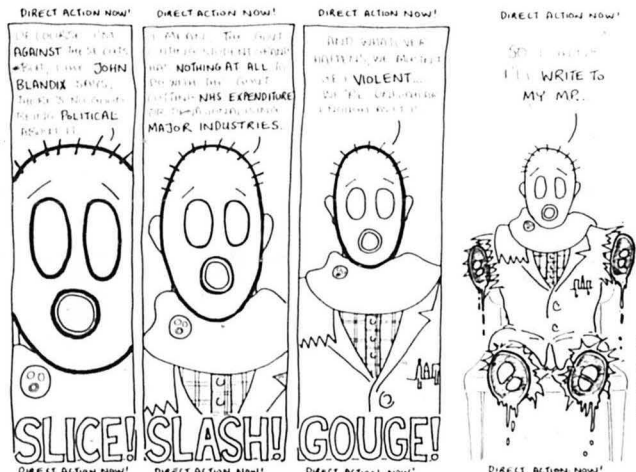
Mark Percival

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