

# Excalibur

Everything secret degenerates; nothing is safe that does not show it can bear discussion and publicity  
—Lord Acton

Excalibur, founded in 1966, is the York University weekly and is independent politically. Opinions expressed are the writer's and those unsigned are the responsibility of the editor. Excalibur is a member of Canadian University Press and attempts to be an agent of social change. Printed at Daison's, Excalibur is published by Excalibur Publications.

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## What can you do with the prof who has everything?

Is tenure sacred?

Once a professor achieves that lofty status, he effectively ensures that the job is his for life, assuming that he doesn't start shooting students in his lectures.

For the past few years, bodies like the Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT) and the Alma Mater Society of the University of Victoria have seriously questioned the merits of tenure.

And now, the realization that the number of tenured professors at York this year may approach 65 per cent of the total faculty population, should force York toward a similar re-evaluation.

### HERE GOES

The mechanics of tenure are confusing, but they are basically these. If a professor is considered a good teacher, if he's published a few treatises, and if he's made his mark on a few committees, he can gain tenure.

And that means he can't be fired unless he is found guilty of "gross misconduct, a high degree of incompetence, or persistent neglect of duty to students or to scholarly pursuits." Those charges are notoriously hard to prove.

Advocates of tenure agree that there are two main reasons for tenure's existence. The first is that it protects academic freedom, defined by CAUT as "the right to teach, investigate and speculate without reference to prescribed doctrine."

Tenure was designed to protect dissidents against such persecution. "Boldness would suffer if the research and scholarship of a mature faculty were to be subject to periodic scorekeeping," said Yale president Kingman Brewster Jr. in 1972, "on pain of dismissal if they did not score well."

"It would both dampen the willingness to take long-term in-

tellectual risks and inhibit if not corrupt the free and spirited exchanges upon which the vitality of a community of scholars depends."

### BAIT

The second rationale for tenure was that of job security; in a period when university professors were scandalously paid, tenure was used as bait to persuade people to take a vow of academic poverty, secure in the knowledge that they had at least a steady job.

The second rationale is the easier to dispute. Professors currently are not as highly paid as they would be in jobs in the industrial sector; but they must make that concession when they enter an organization which lives not off profits, but off government grants.

And at that, an arts professor currently earns an average salary of \$25,549, an associate professor \$17,558 and an assistant professor \$14,324; all are decent wages — indeed, the professor is comfortably ensconced in the middle class.

Hence, the concept of job security compensating for the rigours of academic life no longer seems relevant in the case of York's faculty. If tenure is to stand, it must stand on the basis of its contribution to academic freedom.

### SOME BIASES

If tenure guaranteed the right to work "without reference to prescribed doctrine", there might be a solid basis to it. Too many times, however, the very biases and censorship which the system hoped to prevent occur before or during the very awarding of tenure.

In a report to CAUT by its committee on academic freedom and tenure in 1972, the committee expressed concern that "departments, by a delicate mixture of non-renewals and new appointments, can ensure that no one teaches in the department unless he shares a particular orientation toward the discipline — that orientation defined by the voting majority of the department."

"In the social sciences particularly, that historical moment presents itself when the radical department can rid itself of dissidents on the right, or when the traditionalist department can un-

load its radicals."

Not only does the university risk getting stuck with the obsolete, but every "slot" mortgaged for a full professor's lifetime blocks hope for advancement by new, younger teachers.

### ARBITRARY

There have in the past been charges that course evaluations, written by students and compiled to deliver a judgment of a certain teacher's ability, are used in a most offhand way; if a department wishes to grant a teacher tenure, it may choose to keep a negative evaluation hidden, just as a good teacher's positive evaluation may never reach the committee if that teacher has a surplus of enemies in his department.

There exists at present a

senate committee on tenure and promotions, with minimal student representation, whose purpose is to decide which teacher gets tenure and which does not.

### CRYING NEED

Fine. But there is a crying need for a new senate committee to investigate the whole issue of whether tenure is a viable academic safeguard in the 1970s.

That committee — composed perhaps of two tenured profs, two untenured profs and two students — could recommend at least that course evaluations have an automatic heavy weighting in the tenure decisions.

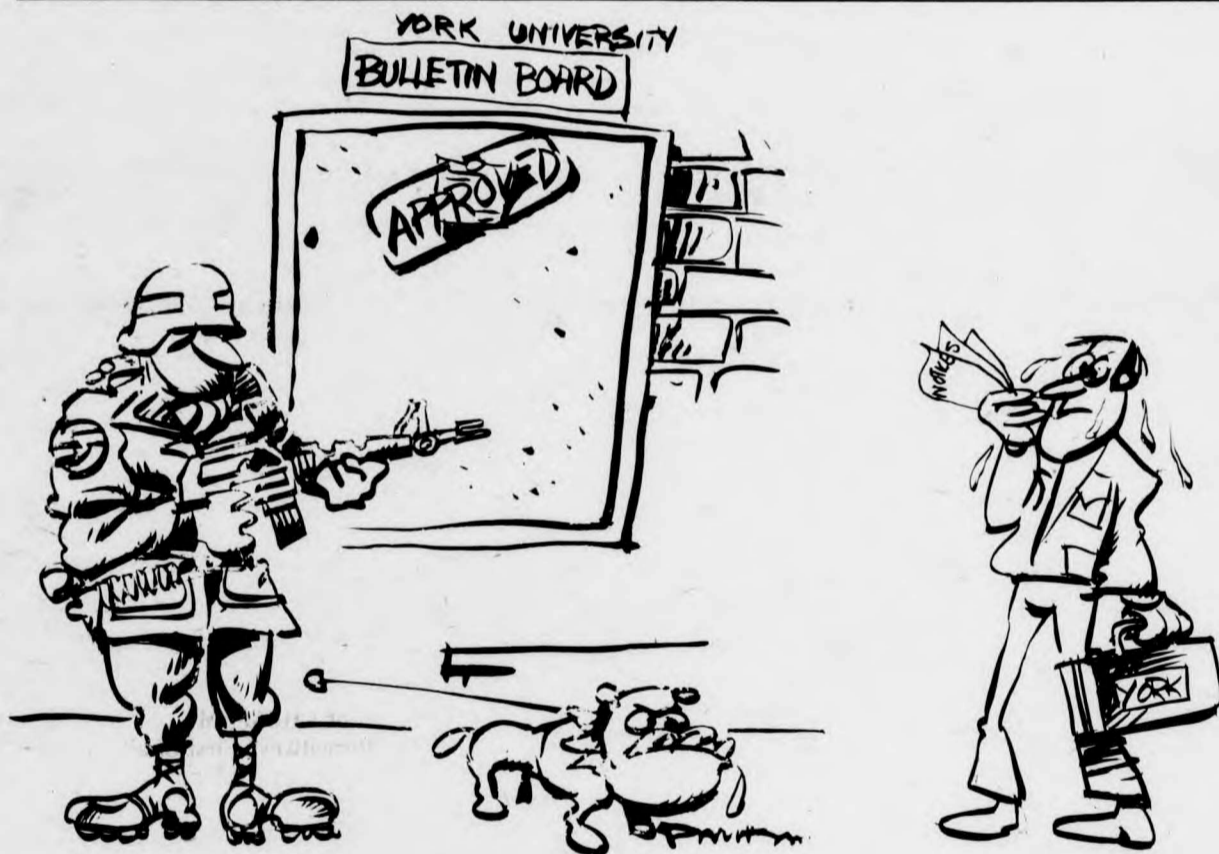
Or, going a step further, that tenure should not be for life; rather, that there should be a periodic review of tenured

professors every five years to weed out the incompetents and leeches.

Or, going the full course, that tenure should be abolished.

Whatever such a committee decides, it should not be influenced by the fact that every other university has a system of tenure. That is not an argument in favour of tenure, but merely an excuse not to get rid of it — a poor excuse, if tenure isn't worth keeping.

York should grab the initiative and institute a dramatic review of the whole system, before our entire professorial staff gains tenure and the academic community stagnates under the weight of hierarchy where only death or illness can dislodge the stodgy, the unproductive and the incompetent.



## Paper chase gets a new twist

York people have been screaming for years about paper pollution, and finally somebody has decided to do something about it.

With a vengeance.

Nobody knows who gave the order, if in fact an order was given, but two weekends ago, all the signs on the main Central Square bulletin board, except for the Canada Manpower notices, disappeared.

The move followed meetings between CYSF university services vice-president David Walker and York assistant vice-president John Becker concerning the regulation of posters on campus.

The consensus was a suggestion that each poster be limited to 100 copies, that notices be limited in size, that they be removed when they become outdated, and that walls, doors and windows were not to be used for posters.

A further suggestion, this one hard to believe, was that off-campus groups should not be allowed to put up signs on campus, and that if they persisted to do so after being warned against it, they could be charged with trespassing.

Clearly things are getting out of hand. Granted, bulletin boards around here are so cluttered that it's impossible to read them without a magnifying glass and a blowtorch. A student wishing to put up a sign to sublet an apartment doesn't know whether he's covering up another notice posted

the day before, or an advertisement which has been languishing on the board for a month.

But a maximum limit on the number of posters allowed could never be enforced. The plan to remove outdated posters would require almost a day's work on the part of whoever was relegated to sift through the mounds of paper.

And the warning to off-campus groups must be offensive to anyone who enjoys hearing once in a while about events in the outside world. The idea that a meeting or concert off-campus holds no interest for York students and can therefore not be advertised on campus smacks of censorship, although one would hope the persons who suggested the move had no such intention.

The solution to campus poster pollution will require some thought. Perhaps there could be a general clean-up on pre-ordained days twice a month, at which time all notices would be ruthlessly ripped from the walls. Anybody whose pet event was still in the future or whose prize car was as yet unsold could make a trip to the bulletin board the next day and post that sign once more.

But whatever the ultimate decision, half-baked measures such as outlawing off-campus notices and developing unenforceable rules should be directed toward the same trashcan which swallowed the contents of last month's brimming bulletin boards.

Staff meeting

2 p.m. today

Room 111

Central Square.

Representatives to

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to be elected.

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