

Change must proceed, but cautiously

By PETER MEREY
VANIER III

What is this preoccupation with student rights, with civil liberties, or whatever? Who is it that is about to infringe upon our freedom as students? Surely not our president who, I'm sure, would only want what is best for York U.

The ideas that I'm about to put forward are not meant to create great changes; they only propose an opposing point of view to what seems to be today's trend towards unrestrained revolt — a view which, I firmly believe, is held by the majority.

Does anyone realize what fantastic changes have already taken place in our universities during the past ten years? Professors used to be something comparable to gods, beings that walked into the classroom, gave the lecture and weren't seen until the next one.

When I compare that situation to ours I find that today's grievances simply dissipate, almost like dew drops in the hot sunshine of the morning. They evaporate, leaving us with only a faded memory of their existence.

No, I'm not saying that we should remain silent and that nothing should be done, (for then, we would still be faced with yesterday's anachronisms). Most definitely, improvement should always be sought but — and that's a major 'but' — there are certain ways in which that can be attained. We must be careful with the means we choose to achieve our goals.

Tell me, does anyone remember that disastrous incident at Sir George Williams? Why I really believe some of us have completely forgotten what had occurred there, less than ten months ago! And that certain small group of agitators doesn't even want to remember at all, lest their 'great' causes fall flat on their faces.

(Incredible, this phenomena of revolts and disturbances, incredible I say, how a handful of fools move millions towards their cause, when the majority is not really supporting them!)

So this year, members of York University, we have the comedy called: "The controversy over the 'Order on Campus' ". The important causes of last year have already been forgotten, while next year, fear not, we'll be preoccupied with some other comedy.

Granted, if a few of us want to busy ourselves with things not pertaining to education, that is their choice. I only wish to ensure myself that same freedom of choice, that I might pursue my own interests, just as the rest of my fellow students wish to pursue theirs.

I know that I speak for the majority when I say that I will not allow anyone to encroach upon that freedom. This is why I welcome that certain working paper; it provides the majority with certain assurance that no immature individuals will be allowed to disrupt the general workings of this institution.

York U. may not be a perfect institution, for some aspects of its function may need improvement or alterations. However — and I wish to stress this point vehemently —

I believe that this is one of the best places any of us has ever attended and I'm glad to be part of it.

Some may feel the professor is incapable but it is they in fact, who are incapable.

True, one professor or another may not be performing up to standards, but it is up to us, the students, to make a course worthwhile, to make it live, to read books, to discuss ideas, etc.

The professor is only the means, like the university, through which we can achieve our ends. The freedom in today's classroom is fantastic and yet, go into any tutorial and notice how many opinions will be heard... hardly any.

I find little room for complaints for, who knows, with a little nod from Fate, we all

could have been born in the dark depths of the Amazon Jungle. The soft and warm carpet of our lives can be pulled from under us as easily as an artless maiden will blush when complimented upon her fine taste in clothing. (And such pretty ones we have here at York!)

I remember going to Excalibur's office at the end of the last school year to retrieve a certain article of mine, although many were the promises that it would be printed. At last, I found it, buried among fifty other articles (at least), written by fellow students whose opinion wasn't heard either. (Ah yes, but it is more important to write about the revolts in the U.S., or China's Revolution. Pshaw!)

Is this a city newspaper or one belonging to a university? And this year, I find that the same type of childish, idiotic, immature four letter words are being used. Is this a newspaper written by university students? I should rather think that each week a group of adolescents break into the press room and have a laugh at our expense. It doesn't take much intelligence to write such words.

Why criticize Excalibur? Sometimes it will be very informative and enjoyable, but too often it will not be so, and the ignorant writings of a few reflects upon the rest of us. Here is a perfect example of students being given the freedom to produce, to create something intelligent but, they misuse what comes before that very freedom. Look what happened at the U. of Buffalo during that famous moratorium. A group of irresponsible idiots broke into three floors of a certain building and destroyed all the files that were kept there. Fools! You complain that our freedom is in danger? Irresponsible individuals should not be allowed the luxury of such freedom.

They are strong words and, I'm sure, I am not being fair in my generalizations for there are many conscientious individuals who are not involved. I apologize in advance, but I feel that if these points of view are to be understood they must be underlined in this manner.

Ah, words with such truth:

"Think, what right have you to be scornful, whose virtue is a deficiency of temptation, whose success may be a chance, whose rank may be an ancestor's accident, whose prosperity is very likely a satire."

— W.M. Thackeray



Don't dismiss the radicals so quickly

By JUDY DARCY
York Women's Liberation

Rather than write direct responses to the specific criticisms of the student movement in "The Majority is Heard", I will try to expand on and explain some of the points touched by Peter Meroy.

An example always chosen to discredit the work of the left is that of the destruction of the computer at Sir George Williams University last February.

Without examining the eighteen months of frustrating work through "proper channels" which the black students there went through, obviously without reading reports of the incident which give a totally different picture from that reported in the daily press, and without even acknowledging that racism did and does exist, you dismiss that affair as the work of an irresponsible few.

The daily press, whose distorted coverage of Sir George has excluded any possibility of a fair trial for the students involved, is the same press which every day sensationalizes student revolt and editorializes against radicalism without ever examining the assumptions or the everyday work of the student left.

Let's talk for a while about the principal focus of most student left groups on campuses across Canada today, that is, classroom organizing.

York University, like all other universities in this society, perpetuates and perpetuates a certain set of values and attitudes towards the world; i.e., universities have an ideology.

The rhetoric of our university tells us that "a free play of ideas" is allowed within its classrooms and lecture halls, and that any and all opinions will be heard.

But, we have found in this university, as in high schools and most other institutions of this society, that that is not the case. It is small wonder that in your tutorials you discover that "hardly any opinions will be heard." When our schools have been teaching us to accept, uncritically, a certain set of values, a certain ideology for so long, it is too much to expect that students will acquire a critical attitude towards their education, or be open to an ideology other than that of existing institutions. Ideas don't fall from the sky — we learn them.

We find when we go into our classrooms every day that the university does not even live up to its own liberal rhetoric of teaching and allowing many varying opinions.

Our political science courses claim to give us the analytical tools with which to examine political and social institutions; but, we find that there is no room in their models for examples of groups or institutions which are not supportive of the status quo.

Their pluralist models of society tell us that equilibrium is achieved through the interaction of several groups out of

which consensus is reached; but we find that they ignore the fact that those groups with money and therefore power, have infinitely more effect on decisions than do such groups as the poor, racial minorities, students, etc.

We find that in the few courses offered on Marxism or communism that those ideologies are taught (by professors who lay claims to objectivity) in such a way as to discredit them, if not entirely, then at least by calling them "nineteenth century dogmas" with no practical applications possible in the modern world.

Humanities courses on such themes as alienation, with such groovy titles as "Man in Search", we have discovered through experience, give a superficial and, more important, false treatment of the areas they deal with.

We learn, by studying 19 different cases of alienated men, that although alienation is a widespread phenomenon in this society, that somehow it is a problem to be worked out individually because its roots are individual and inherent in each man.

We do not examine the possibility that perhaps, since alienation is indeed wide-spread it could have its roots in the values and institutions of our society.

Examples such as these in the classroom have brought many students to certain conclusions about the university. When we realize that one ideology — liberalism — is being supported and perpetuated at York University we begin to make some connections between the content of our courses and who holds the real power in this and other universities.

It is as a result of this analysis that many left groups on campuses begin to challenge the ideology which is being taught every day in the classroom.

Every time a professor carries out his function of passing on the values of the status quo, under the guise of "value-freeness and objectivity", we try to point out and explain exactly what it is that he is doing.

This brings us to what you referred to as "the comedy called the controversy over the Order On the Campus".

The ferment over that document arose because it became obvious that the implementation in any way of that "working paper" would explicitly deny students the right to be critical of their education.

According to the guidelines laid down in that document, challenging the nature of our education in the classroom is effectively disrupting the general workings of the institution.

Although you speak, Peter, of the fantastic changes which have taken place in our universities in the past 10 years, that is, "professors used to be something comparable to gods".

You contradict yourself when you say that although some "may feel that the professor is incapable but it is they, in fact, who are incapable."

The fact is that the content of our education has not

changed at all and the role of the professor in that process has only changed superficially.

Although the packaging is different, (they wear the same bell-bottoms and beards that we do) the authority of the professor remains unchallenged. It is still he who has the power — whether or not to assign essays exams and grades (and more often than not he still does), to decide the content that will be covered in his course, to determine which criticisms of that content are valid and will be heard, and to decide to what degree students can enter into "democratic" decisions about that course.

It is precisely because a professor's power is still defined this way, that you, too quickly evaluate students critical of their education as "incapable" and do not consider for long the possibility that the professor could indeed be the one who is "incapable".

Rather than dealing with the analysis made by the student movement of our educational system and of our society, you fall into the trap of accepting and reacting against the false stereotypes of "radical students" created by the media.

None of your criticisms deal with our analysis of society and therefore education.

You speak of the Order on Campus controversy as "not pertaining to education" without understanding the potential of that document of restricting both your rights and mine to be critical of our education.

The "disastrous incident at Sir George Williams" is passed off in your mind as the work of an irresponsible few bent on destruction, and therefore you, and others never deal with the reality that racism does exist not only in that country to the south, but also all across this country, including Sir George Williams University in Montreal and York University in Toronto.

Williams University in Montreal and York University in Toronto.

When you speak of a "group of irresponsible idiots" breaking into a building and destroying all the files during a moratorium on the war in Vietnam you forget that those draft files are the bureaucracy behind the killing of thousands of Vietnamese people and young U.S. soldiers every day.

You give yourself and your fellow students very little credit, Peter, when you say that "a handful of fools can move millions towards their cause."

Perhaps if you dealt with questions of racism, and the war, and destruction of property, and your own education a little more honestly and seriously, you would realize that students, and blacks, and workers, and the poor, are not marching in the streets every day because of charismatic and irresponsible leadership; but, rather, because they are tired of suffering an oppression in this society which is very real to them.