

Secrecy shrouds future for foreign lit.

By ANDY MICHALSKI

Secrecy shrouds the future of York's foreign literature department. Faculty appear unwilling to talk. A faculty of arts subcommittee meets in secret and makes "routine progress". Dean of arts John Saywell remains aloof and uncommunicative.

Rumors are confirmed that Saywell wants the department submerged under linguistics — against the senate passed motion for two equal departments — but nobody can prove it.

Should future academic vice-president Walter Tarnopolsky know about any changes. "No," says subcommittee chairman John Yolton, "progress has to keep apace."

Last year, a special outside committee chaired by U of T professor G.L. Stagg recommended that the department be abolished, to be replaced by a department of Hispanic and Italian Literature. Students would receive any language training in Spanish, Italian or Russian in the Division of Linguistics and Language training.

Stagg's committee pointed out that the calendar's advertising second year courses 'presupposes the ability to read, write and speak the appropriate language with facility." This, they said, was highly unrealistic and discouraged students from entering and the department needed more students. This clause remains in the calendar.

Stagg's committee said the department should not think about any graduate program in foreign literature. But they were "impressed by the care and expertise shown in the acquisition of materials" which it considered "adequate to sustain studies up to the honors BA level."

The faculty of arts council committee of undergraduate studies produced a sub-committee to look over the entire question once again.

There wasn't enough co-operation between the literature department and linguistic and language. The recommendations of arts dean John Saywell's committee noted that Toronto had a large Italian community to help bolster an Hispanic-Italian department.

Chaired by philosophy professor John Yolton, this second committee sat all through the summer. Like the Stagg committee, it had no students.

Yolton said the foreign literature department had a rough time getting off the ground with too few students. Did it warrant one professor and six assistant professors plus a special lecturer, he asked.

The committee received over 20 written briefs and listened to confidential interviews. Its findings were not that startling — pretty well the usual problems: personality conflicts between various faculty and lack of co-operation between them.

The very nature of foreign literature tends to attract conservatives, the romanticists and the lovers of culture. The language teachers enjoy the modern audio-lingual razmataz that spells progress and high cost equipment. As Yolton's committee notes, "While the literature departments may tend to be traditional in their approach to language studies, the Division of Linguistics and Language Training may have overemphasized the audio-lingual method."

The committee recommended two departments once again: a division of language studies and a department of foreign literature.

The DLS would have three basic areas: language training, linguistics and interdisciplinary language and cultural studies. The DFL would be strengthened with crossappointment of faculty instead of hiring specialists. York needed a unified literature department, they said, which offered translation courses and combined honors degree programs in comparative literature.

The committee didn't see its job as ending right there. It wants itself or someone else to oversee the language oriented studies until the problems "are well on their way to being sorted out."

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