

'Sciencing': a game we should be playing?

Richard Dubinsky

For anyone struggling through Psych 400 or Soc Work 312, behavioural science is anything but a game. But for York's Dr. Neil Agnew, there are good reasons to think of it just that way. Agnew is one of a group of behavioural scientists who are working to show people that science's game plan, applied to their lives, can help them take control of their behaviour.

A program using scientific concepts to help bring about behavioural change, called SCAMP, was initiated by Agnew, Bill Scott and Lucie Cantrell about five years ago. SCAMP is an acronym for the Self Change and Modification Program, designed to help people take control of themselves.

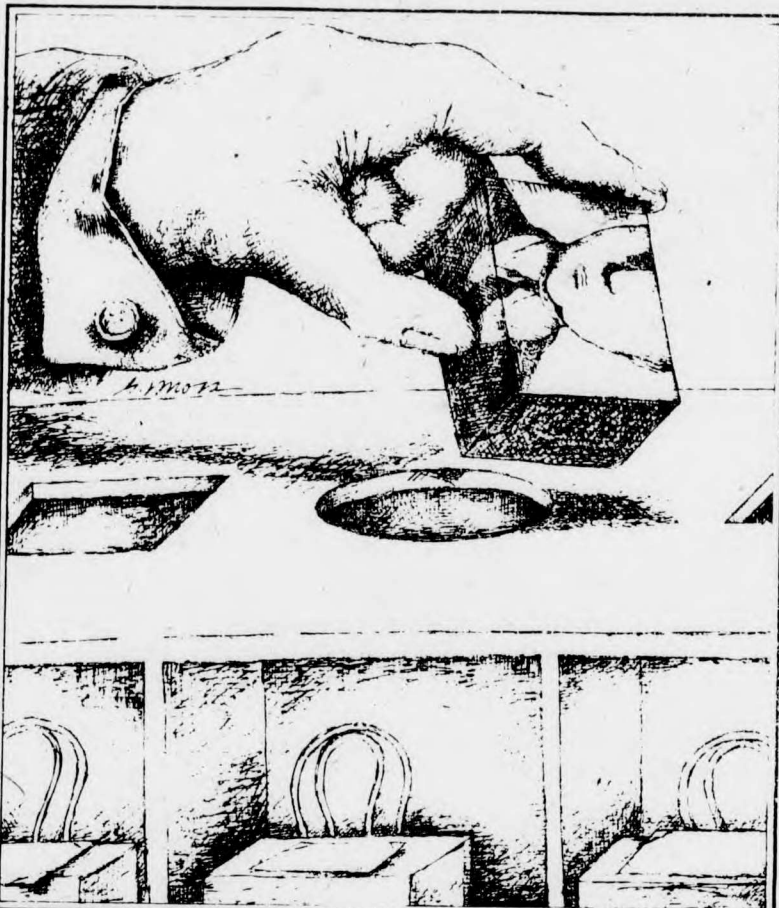
SCAMP is an excellent example of what Agnew calls sciencing.

"Each participant becomes a scientific researcher using himself and his environment as the laboratory. The experiment's purpose is designed to permit the individual to take an active part in shaping his own behaviour. The methodology focuses on overt behaviour, permitting one to observe and quantify their actions in a manner similar to the way one might observe and quantify chemical reactions in a laboratory. In following a detailed program outline you can map your own behaviour. The techniques used in SCAMP permit a more objective view of yourself, which opens the door to the desired self control.

The SCAMP program is open to all York students; more information may be obtained by telephoning 667-2241 or visiting Room 145 in the Behavioural Sciences Building.

While SCAMP is only one example of Agnew's concerns his interest in science goes much deeper.

In collaboration with Sandra Pyke, he is currently working on the 3rd edition of their book, *The Science Game*, published by Prentice-Hall. This book describes the aspects of scientific research in a clear and identifiable way. It is argued that sciencing is like any other great game; objectives, plays, umpires, prizes, penalties, good and bad luck are all put



together by a series of loosely held rules.

Dr. Agnew presents a radical view of scientific progress. He believes that science is a process of invention or creation rather than discovery. "The world is not necessarily divided up into neat pieces waiting to be discovered but rather, it is a great buzzing confusion," he says. With his brains, points of view and various instruments, man "imposes order on the buzzing confusion or data stream, then shouts 'Look what I found!', drawing a circle around a bit of experience.

"Most scientists operate within a relatively confined frame of reference which is sprinkled with observational checkpoints." But these, according to Agnew, are 'checkpoints', anchors or signposts within a very large area of speculation. The complete field is immense, covering an infinite number of variables.

The most important thing in science or art is the necessity of having a strong set of bounding assumptions. A scientist needs a

strong hypothesis. This is both his strength and weakness. The strength is that he enjoys his work, works hard, considers his alternatives and tests them.

The weakness is that he is relatively blind to other hypotheses. But without a strong hypothesis his mind is open, and

"an open mind" is the quickest way not to get any work done."

Agnew believes that "science is a set of evolving tribal myths and

it is a Christmas cake and for a beta particle it's all holes." In such cases it is only your point of view and your probes which determine

SCAMP can help you take control of your life.

once you're trained, then you can participate." As the assumptions change, the tribal myth changes.

As an example, Agnew refers to a large oak desk: "using your hands as detectors the desk seems very solid, from a termite's point of view

whether something is solid or not.

Agnew sums it up well: "If you like to play on a smooth field, on a clear day, with cool empires, administering precise rules, then science is probably not your game."

Geo-Science club formed by York students

Carl Sagan

Science is receiving more interest every year at York as evidenced by the formation of the new Geo-Science Society.

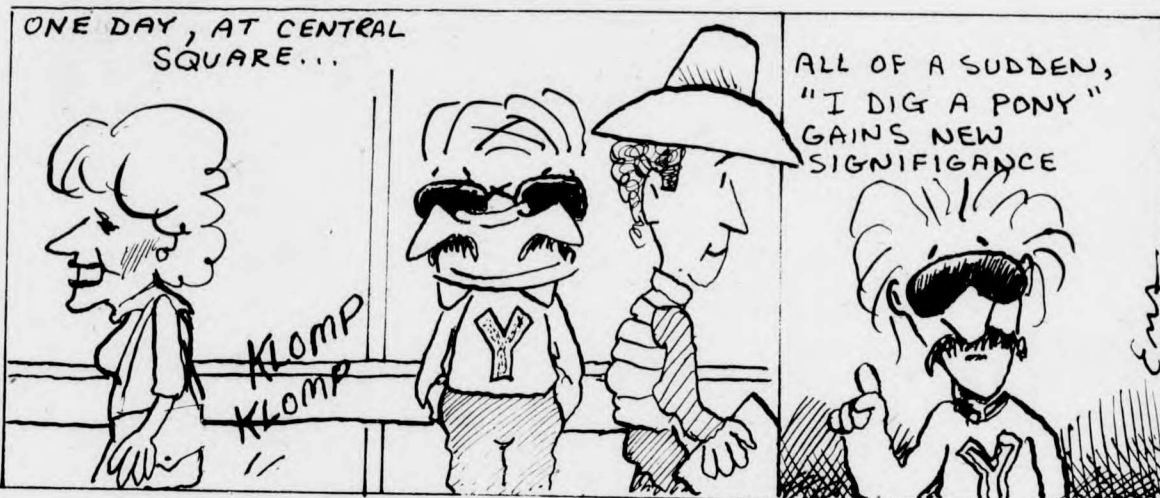
Geo-Science includes the study of physics, geochemistry, geology, environmental studies and of course geography. Ed Hare along with Nich Keehn started the society, which is non-profit, and independent, to bring more awareness of the study and uses of these sciences in the working world.

Toward this end the society will bring to York speakers in various fields. The first speaker in the series

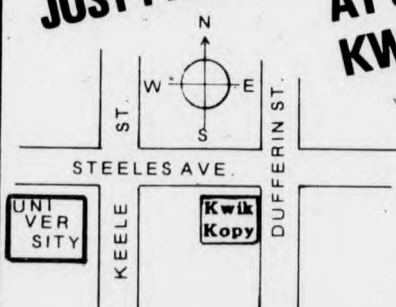
will be John Cox, President of Exploranium. Cox will speak on the Proton Magnotomator application. The meeting will start with refreshments at 3:30 on the 29 January in room 315 Petrie Science Building with the talk starting at 4:00.

Business students should be especially interested in this society. A better understanding of these subjects may be a tremendous benefit to those seeking employment in the petroleum industry.

All those interested should leave a note at Rm. 101 Petrie directed to MR Nick Keehn.



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