


NEWS BRIEFS

U of T parity hopes smashed

Faculty has squashed any chance of structural reform at the University of Toronto's faculty of arts council. Student members walked out of the council's general committee last Monday when it refused to discuss a minority report from the restructuring committee favoring parity as a long term goal. Instead, the general committee issued a No Report statement. The restructuring committee had dissolved itself in December when four students and a professor abstained after realizing that students and faculty were hopelessly deadlocked against each other.


Parity working well at Algoma

Both faculty and students seem fairly pleased at the results of parity at the Algoma College's academic council — now in use since last Nov. 11. The council had affirmed the principle of student representation and then went on to pass a parity motion giving students 31 representative on the body. Algoma College is the Sault Ste. Marie campus of Sudbury's Laurentian University.



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Stong reform blocked

Larry Kazdan:

By LARRY KAZDAN

Two years ago, a controversial proposal for university reform came from psychology professor David Bakan. The proposal was based on the following proposition — students should have freedom to study and

teachers freedom to teach.

Sounds simple? Yet this proposition seriously challenged York's bureaucratic structure.

For instance, students at York, shortly after their arrival, find themselves registering in five courses (or rather five question marks). After any initial attempts to chuck any courses whose agony is immediately apparent, students settle down to attend their lectures and seminars and to complete those assignments they are given.

Some people find fulfillment, but a great number of others find that the courses to which accident and the compulsion of choice have delivered them, does not necessarily coincide with any internal interest or motivations. What to do? Some play the game because it is a means to satisfy their professional ambitions. Some drop out. And some bear their ills with a stoicism based only on the lack of any articulated or approved alternatives.

The time has come to create an alternative — and Stong College is spearheading the drive with a proposal for an experimental BA program. Essentially the plan emphasizes what York has forgotten — the student and teacher must both be committed to their common project. This is not automatic. It can't be assumed. It can't be guaranteed. But a means to encourage this is to let students seek out teachers whose general interests and areas of knowledge have been indicated.

The specific content and responsibilities involved in a course would be discussed and created together by the participants. Since the course could not begin within an initial agreement between student

and teacher, freedom to teach and freedom to learn would be maximized. This does not mean there would be no restrictions; only that these would exist because resources are finite, rather than because of administrative obstacles.

The Stong Proposal has a number of other interesting features — a 'dossier' of the student's work would replace grades; four areas of specialization might replace five courses; the year might, at convenience or necessity, be extended to 11 months.

The present status of the proposal is this. The senate must decide if the Stong College Experiment merits a task force to examine it. If the senate decides no, then, quite simply, the plan is at an end.

A sub-committee of the senate's academic policy committee has already advised the senate against approving the Stong proposal on grounds that the report is based on a "lack of knowledge" of York's "rather wide degree of flexibility." The sub-committee, perhaps dimly aware that this flexibility is not altogether perceived, makes its own thrust at university reform.

Its first recommendation is that present flexible regulations be "clearly and prominently set out in faculty and departmental publications." Its second major recommendation, a model of precision, is an enjoiner to faculties to "facilitate, rather than frustrate, the exercise of various options." These recommendations have been approved by senate.

Professor Virginia Rock and other Stong proposal backers are meeting on Wednesday in the Stong College Junior Common Room.

Erratum

The Dec. 6 edition did not include credit to the New Directions Publishing Corporation, or to the author Lawrence Ferlinghetti for the poem, "Christ Climbed Down". This was a production error by our publishers, Newsweb Ltd. McLelland and Stewart are the agents in Canada for New Directions.

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