

# Excalibur

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

## Poli. Sci. a winner

York's political science department, in its never ending battle with reality, has won again.

In a sweeping move Monday the department ruled that Canadian citizenship is, to all intents and purposes, a non-existent category. (At press time it was unknown whether or not a letter had been sent to the department of immigration informing them of the new discovery.)

Our political scientists have come to the conclusion that anyone who has come to Canada to do Phd work and who has taken out landed immigrant papers has, therefore, demonstrated his commitment to the country.

In other words, if you're here, you're committed; a superficial analysis at best; at worst an attempt to put the department back on the continental academic market scheme.

Such superficial analysis on the part of contemporary political scientists is not unusual, but in face of the recent Americanization debate, can York's political science department really be that naive? Where have they been for the last two years? Do they really believe the only reason Americans come here is out of a sense of commitment to Canada? Could there not be a few ulterior motives such as:

1) The American market is so glutted with MAs and Phds that many Americans

can't get jobs in the U.S.

2) Americans are given a two year income tax exemption by the Canadian government.

3) It's easier to build a name for yourself in a new, up and coming Canadian department that it is to fight your way up the more competitive academic ladder at most established U.S. universities.

The political science department's "two-file" system was never the be all and the end all, but it was a step in the right direction. In its watered down form it's a joke; it's not very difficult to have a Canadian first hiring policy when you simply classify everyone as a Canadian.

All an American need do now is come up, teach in Canada for a year or so and then apply to York as a "Canadian."

Instant Canadians; no more sitting around for five years to pick up citizenship; no more waiting awhile to familiarize yourself with the country, its history, its culture, its people.

What the department has once again failed to do is define a person's commitment in terms of his ability and desire to teach and research Canadian content.

In short, the major criterion for hiring must be: Is the professor doing work that benefits and serves the needs of the Canadian people?

## Letters to the Editor

### Council irresponsible

I would like to comment on the irresponsible manner in which the Council of the Faculty of Arts granted Howard Halpern his petition to take all of his fourth year courses on an ungraded basis.

It is very important to note that the council did not adopt the report of the Committee on Applications and Memorials. In fact, the council reversed the Committee's decision. The committee recommended that Halpern be granted his petition subject to certain specific criteria (which future petitioners would be required to comply with) and it stated quite clearly that the criteria were an integral part of its decision. The criteria required that the student be in his third or fourth year, and that he have the written consent of the instructor(s) and the department(s) involved.

In other words, Halpern's petition was actually rejected by the committee under the existing regulations, but the committee was, in effect, moving to suspend those regulations, by insisting on the above criteria. If the criteria had been adopted, any third or fourth year student in the faculty (including Halpern) would have been eligible to be exempt from the grading regulation.

The council felt that it would not be appropriate to adopt A & M's criteria, since the Committee on Examinations and Academic Standards is currently reviewing the entire grading procedure. The Applications Committee position was clear: If there were no criteria, there could be no petition. The council's only logical choice was to reject the committee's report outright (and thus reject the petition as well).

But the council voted to approve Halpern's petition — without any reasons attached — and to send A & M's criteria to the Committee on Academic Standards for study. Dean John Saywell's totally irresponsible remark ("For God's sake, let's grant him the petition!") coupled with the approaching six o'clock adjournment, influenced the council's decision considerably.

Saywell (and other councillors) seemed to feel that Halpern should be granted his petition purely on the grounds that he had been waiting for so long!

Halpern may have been restricted by this regulation, but so is every other student (and professor) in the faculty. Halpern's case cannot possibly be compared to that of the student who breaks a leg, and petitions the committee to drop a course. It is fair and equitable to every other student to grant that student an exemption, because it is possible for every other student to break a leg.

The council's job is to protect the in-

dividual rights of students — to ensure that all students and staff are treated equally — by passing objective regulations. The Committee on Applications tries to ensure that if a student is suffering a genuine hardship (for example, physical disability or emotional problems) the regulations will not penalize him. But the committee must protect individual rights by ensuring that the reasons for the exemption are not exclusive to one individual; in other words, that any student could conceivably qualify (if he were sick, blind, etc.)

Halpern had originally complained that the committee had violated his individual rights. (The committee spent hours discussing his petition, after which each member drafted a position paper from which the final criteria were taken.)

Since when do individual rights include the right to preferential treatment?

This is exactly what the council has done; it has granted one student special treatment, at the expense of every other student and professor in the faculty. The council cannot morally justify this action, if it even realizes the significance of what it has done. If council can grant a special privilege once, it can do it again.

I support Halpern's argument for ungraded courses. But I could not support his petition merely on the grounds that I disagreed with the regulations. The legislation was passed by a majority of councillors, and the proper way to change it is by a motion to that effect in council. That is why the Committee on Applications adopted the report that was presented to council on Dec. 10. To go about it in any other way, to sneak it past councillors in the guise of "justice to a bureaucratic victim," while destroying the right of each student to be treated equally in the meantime, is to subvert the legislative (and protective) process of council. I must emphasize that there is a difference between council passing objective legislation, which applies to everyone, and council passing out arbitrary privileges, for which no one else can qualify. The council has no moral right to perform the latter function.

Besides, if the A & M members voted to approve petitions merely because they personally disagreed with the particular regulation, the council would be in the position of having all of its legislation subject to veto by whichever eight of its members happened to be sitting on the committee at the time.

With this in mind, I find Halpern's elation over the results somewhat disturbing. The person who was so anxious about individual rights earlier seems rather inconsistent now. In last week's EXCALIBUR, he stated that he is happy about the two precedents he set (namely, the right to take ungraded courses; and the fact that a student has won



"I explained at the start of the year, There is positively NO excuse for a late essay!"

his petition on the sole grounds that he disagreed with the regulations). Any good that might have accrued from the first precedent is negated by the second.

In other words, the precedent that has been set is not that a student has been allowed to take all of his course ungraded, but that one student (and his five professors) have been granted a special privilege by the council.

This is a very hollow "victory."

Michael Mouritsen, student member, Committee on Applications and Memorials, Council of the Faculty of Arts.

### Halpern's reply

Councilor Mouritsen says: "One student (and his five professors) have been granted a special privilege by the Council." I hope this is not the case. As I see it, council's decision establishes the right of any arts student to petition for ungraded courses.

In a letter to your committee, received December 18, I ask the committee to expand on a particular statement contained in its report to council: "The Committee cannot approve a petition using criteria which are exclusive to one individual." You would not want to set criteria that could be met by only one person, and a set of objective criteria might help speed action on subsequent petitions.

I assume, however, that if a petitioner were to offer alternative criteria with good strong argument as to why they ought to be employed, his petition would be considered, as carefully as mine, on its own merit.

HOWARD HALPERN

### Elevator overloaded

The incident in which 23 persons were trapped in a north tower elevator of the Murray G. Ross Building in January has been fully investigated and the cause of the malfunction was overloading.

Complaints from the 23 passengers centred around lack of ventilation in the elevator; the long period of time (over 30 minutes) it took for the Safety and Security operator who answered the call for help to locate the Dover/Turnbull elevator mechanic who was repairing another campus elevator at that time; and the rudeness and lack of concern shown by the repairman at the time of the emergency.

Immediate steps were taken after the incident to repair the defective elevator

exhaust fan and to investigate ways of getting more air into the elevator. It must be noted that the law forbids air slots to be more than one inch wide near the floor and two inches wide near the top of the elevator, and the York elevators already meet this maximum. No additional panels are permitted.

A resuscitator is being obtained for the Safety and Security patrol car and Safety and Security has arranged for the installation of overload signs mounted conspicuously in elevators. An integrated Emergency Services Centre on campus is in the final planning stage which should facilitate dealing with unpredictable occurrences. The possibility of equipping elevators with overload switches which provide a warning buzzer and light and prevent the elevator from moving if the load level is exceeded is being investigated.

C.G. Dunn

Director

Safety and Security Services.

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