

Excalibur

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

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A few words of timely advice for York's unions

Everyone has probably finished heaving sighs of relief that the staff strike is over with by now.

At the risk of dwelling on last week's news, we believe that the aftermath of the strike is a good time to examine a question which was rather forcefully raised: the strategy of the YUSA leadership.

The sad fact is that many students were needlessly alienated during the strike, because YUSA more or less defined the student role at the outset ("Boycott! Close the campus!") and then asked the students to fall in behind.

The next time a campus union plans any action — be it a strike, demonstration, or boycott — and expects student participation and support, the elected organizers of York's student councils and general meetings must be consulted well in advance, and involved in all stages of planning as equal allies.

The result will be a more realistic strategy. Unfortunately for union leaders, hundreds of students live on this campus and it was certainly a mistake to treat the university as a factory that had to be closed-up completely.

How could residence students be expected to support the strike and boycott when their elected representatives had nothing to do with planning it?

How could first-year students be

expected to join a boycott when, for all they knew, staying away from class could cost them an academic year—and when the faculty association considered itself legally prohibited from staging a sympathy strike?

There are probably three responses which spring to the mind of strike supporters when told that students were alienated by the union:

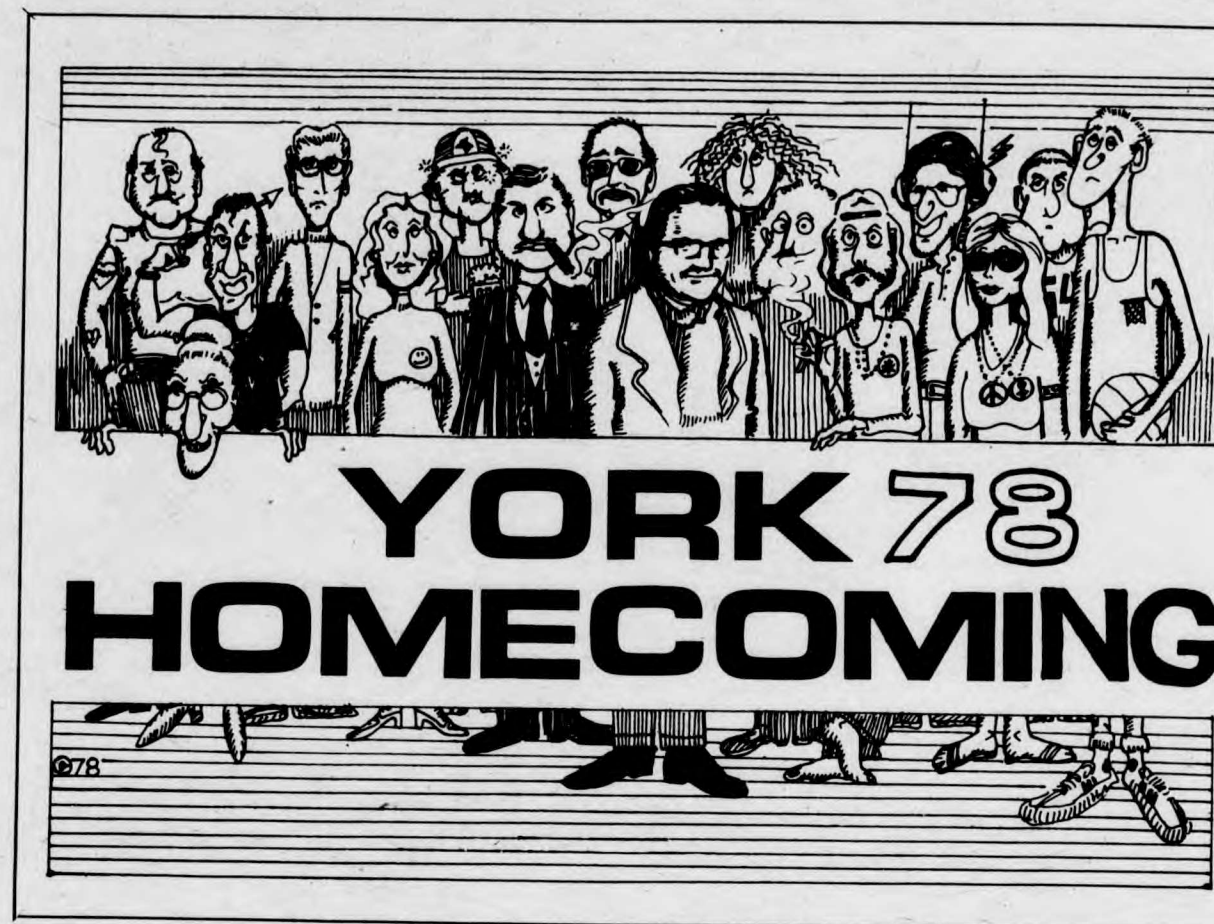
- 1) What about the student strike support committee?
- 2) What about the support of Glendon students?
- 3) What else was there to do?

First of all, the student strike support committee was largely drawn from the left-leaning constituency which could have been counted on to support the union anyway—there is no evidence that they made many converts in the political centre.

The 50 or so students who organized the sit-in were unelected and thus had no mandate to speak for anyone but themselves.

2) Glendon? It's a small place and many Glendon students were acquainted with people on the picket lines. This was surely a key reason for Glendon's relatively strong support for the union—this "human factor" was missing at the big, impersonal main campus.

3) Between a total boycott of the



entire campus—which can't succeed anyway—and half-hearted gestures which don't produce any real pressure, there is a large middle ground. On it can be organized: partial boycotts; demonstrations at York and Queen's park; "teach-ins"; and activities to raise money for a union strike fund.

We suggest that when planning future actions, York's unions explore the alternatives beforehand with elected student council reps, and attempt to work out an

alliance on a principled basis (we realize that unions could never compromise on an issue like scab labor).

We have a sobering thought for Union leaders. Had the strike lasted another week, some of the student councils were prepared to organize a rally directed against both the union and the administration. The idea was not being considered due to "reactionary views," but because of mounting pressure from below: most students were impatient with

both sides.

Such a rally would have been disastrous for the union and, in pitting workers and students against each other, would not have done the anti-cutbacks cause any good. But the councils had to act and the staff association just hadn't done anything to attract student support.

This sort of thing cannot be risked again. It is up to York's unions to recognize the student reality of 1978 and base their strategy on that reality.

Blame economics for enrollment drop says OFS

The following is an excerpt from a brief to the minister of Colleges and Universities, Bette Stephenson, issued last month by the Ontario Federation of Students, which this campus is a member of through the Council of the York Student Federation.

Last year, Ontario witnessed an unprecedented decline in university enrollments; there were 3500 fewer undergraduates and 1000 fewer graduate students than in 1976-77. This should not be confused with the pattern of declining enrollments in elementary and secondary schools, which are caused by the decline in the school-age population. The 18-24 year age group, which is the population base for higher education, will not decline until 1983-84.

It has been suggested that students simply shifted from universities to the more job-oriented college system. This view seriously misrepresents the facts. In 1977-78, colleges attracted the same share of the 18-24 age group as they had for the past two years—about 5.4 per cent. What happened, in fact, was that the overall level of participation in post-secondary education dropped.

This year it is estimated that between 10,000 and 15,000 people in the province have been forced to give up their plans for after-high-school education. This rough estimate is based on the actual enrollment for 1978-79, contrasted with the projections for 1978-79 made two years ago, before the economic barriers loomed as large as they do now. Less than 141,500 undergraduate students are ex-

OSAP applications down 25 per cent

pected to enroll in Ontario universities this fall, compared to the 152,000 projected by Statistics Canada in April 1977 and the 162,000 projected by the Ontario Council on University Affairs in March 1977. The shortfall among graduate students is about 1000.

The situation in the college sector is somewhat efferent; in absolute numbers, enrollments are expected to increase this fall. However, this increase is not exceptionally large, insofar as it is not expected to exceed the growth rate of the 18-24 age group.

One very telling fact about the enrollment trend is that applications for student aid have declined at a greater rate than enrollment. As of September 1, only 60,000 students had applied for OSAP, compared to 80,000 at the same time last year—a drop of 25 per cent. This indicates that the income backgrounds of those who did begin, or return, to college or university may have shifted.

If this preliminary indication proves to be correct, it will mean that post-secondary education in Ontario is becoming less accessible to people from lower-and middle-income families. In a word, it will mean that the social composition of colleges and univer-

sities is shifting—backwards...

Any short-term shift in accessibility can only be attributed to changes in the economic barriers to post-secondary education. To say that these barriers have increased means, in this case, that the costs of education have grown faster than the resources which young people and their families have at their disposal. OFS/FEO estimates that living costs for students will be about 11 per cent higher this year than in 1977-78.

Moreover, many institutions are instituting (or increasing) incidental fees—lab fees, materials fees, and so on. At the same time, resources are shrinking. The official student unemployment rate in Ontario exceeded 16 per cent

this July, and it is likely that summer earnings have either stagnated or decreased. Inflation and unemployment also affect a

35,000 grad & pro. students can't get grants

student's family's disposable income.

According to Statistics Canada, the number of people 25 years and older who were unemployed in Ontario increased by over 25 per cent from July 1977 to July 1978; average weekly wages in Ontario

(in constant dollars) fell from \$248.07 in May 1977 to \$241.94 in May 1978.

The Ontario Student Assistance Program is ill-suited to reducing these economic barriers. In the first place the new aid program made 35,000 graduate and professional students ineligible for any grants, regardless of their need, due to the new four-year limit on grant eligibility.

The grant limitations will particularly affect women; it is precisely in the professional and graduate schools that women are most underrepresented. The only option the Ministry offers these women is assistance in the form of loans only. Study after study has demonstrated the deterrent effect which loans have on students from low-income backgrounds.

Xcal Staff Meets at 2 pm Thurs. Be there!

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