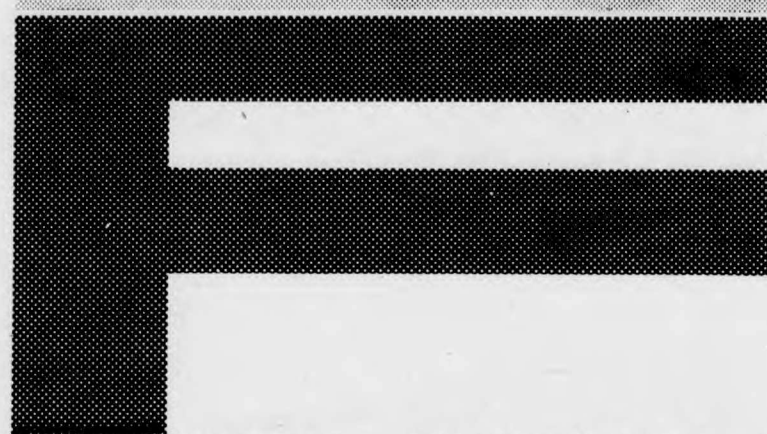


Council representatives voice their opinion

FEATURES



In part three of CYSF Beat reporter **David Dollard's** investigation into York undergraduate student government Dollard asks the student representatives for their views and ideas on the issues facing this year's CYSF Council. Those interviewed were some of the more outspoken and colourful personalities on this year's Council. They are, from Stong College Karin Barry and Jill Shibou, from Winters College Kamla Itwar and Gary Tarquini, from Founders College George Johnston, as well as both student representatives on the Board of Governors, Reya Ali and Marg Evans.

Communication, the Administration, the proposed Student Centre, inefficient Council meetings, and an overly independent CYSF Executive, are the major concerns of York's undergraduate student representatives on the CYSF Council. In each of these areas the student representatives interviewed indicated that despite advances made this year, there is still a long way to go before York undergraduate student government is completely effective.

Stong College representative (and Stong Chairperson), Jill Shibou said, "there is a need to develop a greater rapport with the CYSF Executive and college representatives." The inadequate communication within the CYSF Council has long



Gary Tarquini

been a failing of the system, which is best displayed with the problem surrounding the pick-up of the agenda and reports for CYSF Council meetings.

Winters College representative Kamla Itwar explained that she was unaware that this material was available before meetings in the CYSF office, as she has usually only been given the minutes of meetings, and not the reports, when she has asked for them in the past. Gary Tarquini, another Winters representative, admits that sometimes he does not pick up the material but there are times he has gone to CYSF but the package was not available.

Having covered the CYSF since September I can attest to the unreliable nature of receiving all the necessary information for Council meetings before the meeting convenes, and the debilitating consequences it has on the preparation for meetings.

Improvements have definitely been made this year in the presentation of written material (a rarity in previous years) through the efforts of the Student Executive, but there is still a vacuum within which improvements need to be made.

In the last CYSF General meeting on February 24, the problem with material availability sparked an oral confrontation between Stong's Glen Wells and CYSF President Gerard Blink. Wells was the aggressor on this issue complaining directly to

Blink that reports and other materials for Council should be tabled even earlier than the 24-hour limit developed this year. Wells' flurry shifted from a factual to a personal assault, however, as he demanded that "Blink" (not Mr. Blink or President Blink, just "Blink"—a parliamentary *faux pas*) should see to improving the availability of material.

According to George Johnston, Founders College representative, "Glen Wells is out of line." There is an apparent conflict between (Wells) and Gerard," Johnston added, "but this should be taken care of outside Council." Johnston further explained that if Wells does not "shape-up" he is considering asking him for his resignation.

Wells has subsequently stated that he intends to introduce a private member's motion demanding that reports and minutes be made available by four on the day before CYSF Council meetings. He added that "being presented with material this far in advance will produce more effective and constructive debate in Council." Wells also explained that he has since apologized to Blink for his parliamentary indiscretion.

Communication is not solely a problem within Council, as input from students has been abysmal—a sad tradition that continues at York. Board of Governors (BOG) representative Marg Evans explained that she has put a classified ad in *Excalibur*, so that students can contact her if they have questions or issues to raise. But there has been no response.

Evans also indicated that she would like to see a better linking of the Senate and BOG, so that better information flow between the two would be facilitated. Evans said that structural problems in the undergraduate government mean that, "all students aren't getting represented, specifically commuter students. There is a missing link."

"I'd like to get more feedback than I do," Shibou stated, "I like to think I'm representing all students, but I can't represent those who don't voice an opinion."

The overall student representative view of the Administration was not unfavourable. "The Administration is adequate," Karin Barry of Stong said, "but there are the on-going problems from year to year, such as security and underfunding."

According to BOG representative Reya Ali, "the Administration is responsive, only if you apply pressure in the right places." Ali backed his assertion by citing the role taken by *Excalibur* in the case of Jack Santarelli's dismissal from his position as Director of Security and Safety Services. Ali also said that, "the perceived failure (by the Administration) of undergraduate student government is responsible for the Hare Commission and the Gilmor Report (studies commissioned by the University to look into the future of the non-faculty college system and student government respectively.)"

Ali commented that despite CYSF President Gerard Blink's claim that the "Stop the Gap" campaign, designed to put pressure on the provincial government for increased university and college funding, was an Ontario Federation of Students initiative, the campaign developed because of the action taken by York's President Harry Arthurs and the President of the University of Toronto, George Connell.

"I don't see Gilmor (report) as improving the system," Founder's Johnston said. He explained that an increase in the number of student governments would reduce the available funds, and result in the overlap of efforts. He cited orientation as an example of this. Johnston was also perturbed that "student governments have to prove their (financial) accountability, but the Administration does not." This is in reference to the Administration's failure to fully comply with an Ontario government request for fee breakdowns, and more specifically, a delineation of the \$216 in ancillary fees.

In reference to the Gilmor Report, Stong's Shibou said that she's "upset that President Arthurs hadn't come up with an opinion on (the) Gilmor (Report)." Shibou said she asked President Arthurs about the Gilmor Report at a dinner gathering before Reading Week. However Shibou added that, "He (Arthurs) is very active and knowledgeable about the YUDC (York University Development Corporation). Ninth floor (Ross Building, Office of the President and various Administrative heads) may as well be in Ottawa, for students' knowledge of who they are and what they do."

Of all the topics discussed with the student representatives only one received unanimous support—the Student Centre. Johnston of Founders said, "I have a hard time understanding the opposition to the Student Centre initiative." Stong's Karin Barry stated, "As far as issues



Karin Barry

go, the Student Centre is the main focal point of this year, and personally, I feel its development is crucial." As well, Shibou of Stong said,

"we (students) don't come together enough, that's why I like the Student Centre (proposal), it's something to unite students, and it has brought together different groups now."

The once every third week CYSF Council meetings have come under



Jill Shibou

fire from some of the student representatives. According to Shibou, "CYSF spends too much time on administration and not enough on policy and issues." Shibou feels that the Student Centre has been "the only real issue touched upon this year in Council." She also indicated that since the Hare Commission and the Gilmor Report influence the colleges and student government at York, they should be discussed.

Shibou also responded to Adam French's comments from Part Two "An insider's view looking out" of this series, that "most (student representatives) are ignorant when issues are raised." Visibly upset, Shibou said, "It was easy for the CYSF Executive to assign blame. The Executive should ask, 'why don't they (representatives) know something? Is it my fault?'"

Echoing Shibou's concern that policies and issues are subordinated to administrative matters at CYSF, BOG representative Ali explained that money matters should be dealt with in the budget and monthly reports, thus eliminating the "small change" allotments made every three weeks. This would free the meetings from the traditional allotments (and the time involved to do so), allowing more policy and issue oriented material to be dealt with. According to Johnston, CYSF meetings have also been undermined by the spotty attendance and repeated tardiness of CYSF speaker Marshall Golden.

The final area of concern indicated by the student representatives is the isolation within which the CYSF Executive formulates policy. Of the five college representatives, two were generally pleased with the Executive's efforts. Karin Barry said, "I assess the performance of the student Executive as being exceptionally good, especially (Finance Director Nadine Changfoot."

However three of the five were not too thrilled with the way the CYSF Executive operates. Gary Tarquini of Winters said that "some (people) at Winters believe that the CYSF provides unnecessary services." He cited the typing service as such an example, and felt more time and energy should be devoted to the Student Centre and investigating the proposed rise in intramural fees.

Itwar of Winters also feels that the student representatives are not adequately involved in the process. She sees it as the CYSF Executive forming its own policies, without Council, and then passing it on to the student representatives.

"Individually they do a good job," Shibou said, "But they could give me advanced contact with what they're doing, before or while they're doing it."

The attitude of the student representatives towards their jobs and responsibilities can be best summed up by Tarquini and Shibou. Tarquini said, "If you want to have a good time (at York) you can. You just have to do it." Shibou added that "yes, you're overworked, yes, you don't get any recognition but you do this because you like this."

With undergraduate student government at York entering early adulthood at age 21, growing pains are evident. They are evident in the imperfect communication network to and from students; in the Administration's influence on students and their government; with the desire to expand and develop a Student Centre; in the ineffectual Council meetings, and in the insular policy form-



George Johnston

ing procedure of the CYSF Executive. Yet there is a silver lining in these dark political clouds, as improvements have been made in this year's Council in addition to improved performance of the Executive.

The theory of tabling reports 24 hours in advance is grand, but the practice is not. When the practice matches the theory, inefficient communication (the greatest hindrance to effective government) will no longer be a problem; more informed student representatives will mean more effective student government.