

Editorial

New preventative policies needed for quality air at York

Courtesy of Physical Plant Resources, York now offers an ever-widening range of substance abuse products—fibreglass, glue, dust, paint, and even second-hand garlic odour—fresh to you from the hallowed halls of Central Square.

Those with allergies or asthma are granted double the effect in half the time. And for iron-willed people with exceptional tolerance, there's always the asbestos readily available in Osgoode Hall.

Unfortunately the free dispersal of these products is given without notice to the York community. This past week has been a perfect example.

On Monday, students returned to school, and found cream paint being applied to the walls throughout the south end of Central Square. This, in itself, was actually met with approval in some quarters, as the smell of paint helped counteract the ever prevalent garlic smell emanating from the deficient ventilation of the Faculty Club.

The next morning, a group of men in white frocks suddenly appeared and began to systematically rip open the ceiling boards. One even donned a face mask. By 4:00 p.m., sheets of pink fibreglass insulation were fluttering to the floor as pedestrians flooded Central Square.

When asked yesterday morning about the ceiling work, no less than three administrators in Physical Plant pleaded ignorance. Upon personal investigation, David Kurosky, Director of Safety Services, said that the work was part of a project to revamp the ventilation system in the Ross Building. He admitted, however, that such construction should not have begun before 4:30 p.m.

Why the confusion? Simple—there is no written policy on the matter.

Three years ago, Chris Summerhayes, past-president of the CYSF, erected a modest-sized sculpture in front of the council office. The artwork was dismantled, as the Administration claimed that it blocked the emergency fire escape route which the hallway provides.

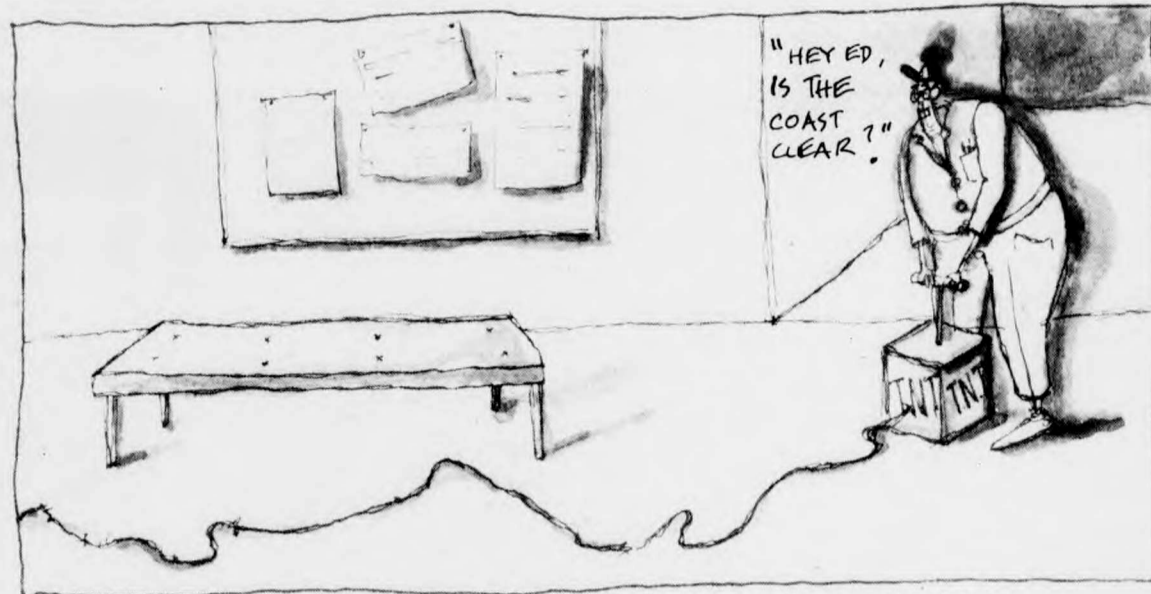
The Administration seems to have since forgotten this precedent, as soon after, benches were stationed in the exact same hallway. That ladders to the ceiling almost completely blocked access to the south doors of the Ross Building Tuesday afternoon was also of no apparent concern to York's administrators.

It seems that rules—even those dictated by the ninth floor—are most certainly meant to be broken.

Take, for example, the rule (enforced last spring) that *Excalibur* and the CYSF shall not, for any reason, install carpets before the Ross building closes at midnight. Evidently, however, this rule did not apply to our neighbour, the Peer Counselling and Volunteer Centre, when hammers, nails, and glue guns accosted our office through cement walls in broad daylight, last fall.

Another more extreme example was the building of the Faculty Club two summers ago. Those working within a three block radius of the site grew hoarse from screaming above the continual drilling. And those who dared to creep closer choked on the unbreathable air, so thick with dust that one had to squint to see through it.

When asked if the air was dangerous, one administrator commented, "Well, I wouldn't recommend breathing it." Only after incessant complaining, tarpaulins—which partially shielded the site—were installed. York is so engrossed in spending tens of thousands of dollars on air testing, that it has neglected the most basic element of pollution control: preventative measures through policy making.



CENTRAL SQUARE RENOVATIONS CONTINUE UNHINTED.

Letter betrays anti-Semitism

Editor:

Re "Awareness Week wastes print in *Excalibur*: reader" (Letter, February 12). John Lumsden painfully betrays rather obvious anti-Semitic tendencies, much as he obfuscates his true sentiments in hazy contradictions.

Mr. Lumsden initially tells us that he is not troubled by the "link" between *Excalibur* and the Jewish Student Federation. However, he admits to being "disturbed about the implications of Holocaust Awareness Week itself." Instead of telling us what the implications are, he continually nullifies every statement of concern and sympathy he pretends to believe. After "confessing" to the problem of anti-Semitism at York, he goes on to blame "an overwhelming Jewish population, some (of) which is undeniably elitist and biased in its relations with non-Jews." Lumsden then tries to prove his point by citing the irrelevant fact that he, a Gentile, received a letter from the JSF which only allows Jews to join.

But Lumsden finally reveals his position when he says that the Holocaust "does not entail mass propaganda meriting a week named in its honour." Ignoring the incoherence and improper use of the word "entail" in the quoted sentence, it is clear that Lumsden does not agree with the conclusion of *Excalibur's* editorial that "knowledge of the past is essential . . . if future (similar) catastrophes are to be avoided," even though he claims he " . . . couldn't agree more." These contradictions do not cancel each other out. Lumsden postures as a concerned humanitarian, but his prejudices keep showing themselves in drivel of the lowest kind.

The gem of his letter, however, is reserved for his stunning conclusion. After waxing moralistic about whether *Excalibur* will give equal treatment to other catastrophes (he does not cite any examples) he says that Holocaust Awareness week is a waste of money because it only serves to "remind us that humans are fallible and made grave mistakes in the past." What Lumsden previously called a catastrophe has now become simply a mistake, an unfortunate but highly understandable outcome of war. It does not take much of an imagination to envisage those in Germany (or anywhere else in the world, for that matter) during the 1940's throwing their arms up (with Lumsden) and exclaiming that the mass extermination of the Jews is a most regrettable error, but, after all, humans are fallible, so we really shouldn't concern ourselves too

much with this minor episode which, in Lumsden's immortal words "does not entail mass propaganda meriting a week in its honour."

Lumsden's objection that the Week will not "make us feel better" is ludicrous. Why should it make us feel better? The point of Holocaust Awareness Week is not to console or apologize for the massacre, but to remember honestly the depths of man's inhumanity to man which continues unabated to this day.

—Cosmo Vecchiarelli

JSF open to all York students

Editor:

Re: the letter written by Mr. John Lumsden (*Excalibur* - 12 Feb/87). As the author of the JSF mailing which was sent out to all residence students care of the residence porters, I would like to state clearly that the Jewish Student Federation (JSF) is an organization that is open for all students to participate in. It does not matter if a person is Jewish or not, or in what way they are Jewish, if a person has a desire within them to become involved in the activities of the Jewish Student Federation, they are more than welcome. We would like them to feel encouraged to get involved. (The exception of course would be a person who advocated violence and the destruction of Judaism.)

The line in my letter to York residence students which may have been taken as an implication contrary to my above assertion, that all are welcome, was likely the following: "Basically we're (JSF) here to provide for the needs of students who happen to be Jewish, and that may include Jewish activities, but not necessarily." for Mr. Lumsden and anyone else who may have read the letter from a point of view similar to his. I would like to draw attention to the first word in the sentence: "Basically." We, the JSF, are basically here to provide for the needs of students who happen to be Jewish. We also have a secondary purpose (which unfortunately was not mentioned in the letter for the sake of brevity and consequently has led to some confusion). This secondary purpose which I should have made clear in my first letter is providing to the gentile York community information about Jews and Judaism vicariously through our on and off-campus events, such as Holocaust Awareness Week. We as Holocaust Awareness week. We hope that by providing such opportunities, mutual love, understanding and tolerance of differences will be fostered between us and our neighbours.

Contrary to Mr. Lumsden, I think campus anti-semitism is not "undoubtedly the result of an over-

whelming Jewish population." Mr. Lumsden finds it convenient to blame the victim. This is a sadly fallacious response, in my opinion. We do not rid ourselves of anti-semitism by ridding ourselves of Jews. I hope Mr. Lumsden will continue to be interested in the topic of anti-semitism to the extent that he will more thoroughly research the real reasons for its existence.

The feeling of helplessness and pessimism that Mr. Lumsden felt when being reminded of the grave moral errors made by our fellow human beings in the '30s and '40s is the first step away from blissful innocence. The next step is anger toward the wrongdoings of the people who made those errors. The third step is to channel and transform that anger into worthwhile positive actions. Outwardly one can do this by being a peace activist, for example. Inwardly one can do this through self-examination for any ill-founded irrational racist, sexist, speciesist or other illogical negative biases within oneself, and work to rid oneself of them through higher minded, benevolent thinking. And the fourth step is to try to stimulate others to go through the same process. This way we shall become free of social injustices such as anti-semitism and other which deserve equal treatment here at York University.

May I conclude by re-asserting the invitation to the recipients of my first letter, but extending it to all who have read this one: if you're interested in getting involved, please drop by the JSF or call 736-5178 and ask for me.

—Martin Salsberg

Lumsden sets record straight

Editor:

In your issue of *Excalibur* for February 12th, 1987, the "Letters to the Editor" section (on page 6) included a letter concerning York's holding of a Holocaust Awareness Week. That letter was head, "Awareness Week wastes print in *Excalibur*" and was printed as being written by a "John Lumsden"; since I have a cousin by that name, since I found the letter's statements disturbing, and since my College was and remains proud to have been a sponsor of that Awareness Week, I have checked further on the authorship of that letter, and am writing to you now, to ask that you print this report of my investigation in your very next issue of *Excalibur* in order to preclude our further embarrassment.

For the record then, I would ask your readers to note that the actual author of that letter was *not*, repeat not, John Patrick Lumsden, my cou-

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excalibur

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(We hope you've enjoyed Yugoslavian Writers & Obscure Jewish Baseball Players; Next week: Blonde Bombshells of the '50s and Product Mascots)	
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