

Ending the alienation

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As a newcomer, my choice of colleges was based on a suggestion from a friend. Without this advice, I certainly would have spent a different four years at York. Upon choosing Bethune, I proceeded to spend the next year occupying most of my spare time in Stong Residence, at Stong floor parties, and even Stong dances. I didn't play any sports for Bethune, I didn't go to Norman's once, and didn't meet too many fellow Bethuners. This college-alienation problem was certainly shared by many other commuters, even to this day.

With this in mind, it is not surprising that I agree competely with Harry Arthurs' proposals for restructuring student government at York. Wait a second. I'm not a fan of Harry Arthurs, nor do I completely agree with all of the methods he is using. However, based on personal experience, I agree with his thinking. That is, due to the overpopulated situation at York — mostly due to the lack of government funding — there must be some changes to the existing system. These changes will hopefully bring about increased student involvement and awareness of extra-curricular life at York.

After many months of negotiations, it appears Harry has given in, albeit only slightly. The modest success which student leaders and other interested individuals/groups have achieved does offer some encouragement for future negotiations.

A major concern which affects Bethune College is section B-16(c). This concerns the distribution of additional funds to Student Governments "to assist them in responding to significant changes in revenues and obligations, if any, which may occur during the transition period."

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Fortunately for Bethune and Winters Colleges, our so-called "marriage" partners were selected last year, so both colleges have been able to concentrate their efforts at recruiting students. This year, Bethune's enrolment increased by over 300 students, and with the physical education department joining Bethune, these numbers will increase

during the year. Naturally, additional funds would allow our College Council to provide more services for the 11 clubs currently housed in Bethune College.

Another issue which should be of concern to all the college/faculty governments is that regarding constitutions. Several times in the White Paper there is mention of adherence to constitutional framework/procedure on the part of the college/faculty governments, and any new ones that might arise.

If this is the case, the administration may consider the establishment of policies which accept and formally recognize student government constitutions. Why should a faculty or college government adhere to its constitution if the University does not recognize them to begin with?

Finally, there is a potential serious issue which wasn't spelled out in the White Paper. It appears as though the existing College Governments (Bethune, Calument, McLaughlin, Stong, Vanier, Winters) may be heading for a fate similar to that of the wooden carriage — slowly being phased out. I say this because it appears as though we college governments are losing much of our bargaining power.

The White Paper will preserve our existence until the transition period is over. But what about after this? The Deans and Masters will be extracting a good part of our resources, and although they are to be spent in our best interests, consultation once a year between the Deans and Masters and the college governments is hardly enough, and the fact that this money is out of our control doesn't help matters either.

With CYSF as the central student government, an even larger portion of College Government money is out of our hands as well. Each college does have two representatives who sit on CYSF, with voting privileges. However, this new format does not seem to be working. There is too much going on within each College for presidents to have time to see where their colleges' money is being spent.

A solution may be greater involvement for each college when it comes to budget decisions made by CYSF. Although I do not want to take away from the authority of the central government, there needs to be more legitimate representation from all college and faculty governments, especially in the years ahead when new organizations and faculty governments will exist, each seeking financial assistance. And, when one considers the shortage of funds, every dime spent will need to be scrutinized.

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