

No thorough explanation given

PEAK grad theatre programme is toppled

By EVAN LEIBOVITCH

PEAK is dead. York's graduate theatre programme will not continue in its present format, the company of thespians that played all over the place, from Poland to McLaughlin. And although all parties involved consider it a fait accompli, the dust has not quite settled yet as protests, denials, fact sheets and accusations fly between PEAK and the Fine

Arts administration.

PEAK started two years ago when John Juliani, a graduate of the National Theatre School in Montreal, was hired by Fine Arts dean Joe Green on a two year contract to direct the programme.

"Although PEAK was formed on the assumption that it would get a Complex 1 dining hall, it in fact did not have an acceptable place to practice at first." Said Malcolm

Black, chairman of the theatre department.

Many months passed before PEAK could get its point across, but in the beginning of its second year, PEAK moved into a more-than-suitably equipped McLaughlin Dining Hall.

It was agreed that PEAK would use the hall for three weeks each month.

On January 26 this year, Juliani was told by Green that his contract would not be renewed after the second year of the programme. Juliani requested information concerning why, when and how the termination would take place, and at a meeting Green attempted to justify the action with reference to an unpredictable budget, and the comments he had received from people within the department and students who had dropped out of the programme.

PEAK dropped and added students as it went, from high of 17, to a low of five. There are presently seven graduates and one fourth year undergrad in PEAK.

Juliani has since challenged these reasons as "hasty, inadequate, unqualified, and dishonest." (He later qualified that to mean "intellectually dishonest".)

He told Excalibur earlier this week that he was fully prepared to stand behind the allegations with "facts and statistics", though he refused to release them to Excalibur. He charged that the rationale of cost being the limiting factor was "nonsense", because he claimed that he heard "from the highest source at York" that cost would not be a factor in the decision whether to continue PEAK or not.

Juliani said that he didn't know what the "real" reasons were, and could only speculate that faculty members in the theatre department were less than receptive to his particular programme. He emphasised that he was not making these charges to save his job at



Oakland Ross photo

The finger of doom sought out PEAK director (provocateur) John Juliani last Thursday. The PEAK theatre programme will be cut from the faculty of fine arts budget.

York, but that he simply wanted to know the truthful explanation of why PEAK was cut off, and of why the PEAK concept could not outlast his stay with the department.

His last statement referred to a communication dated February 25 from Green which stated that the PEAK concept was being discontinued, since Juliani was considered to be the only person who could run PEAK in its present format.

When contacted this week, Joe Green noted that the existence of any graduate theatre programme

would depend on knowing what his budget would be for next year. Green said that he didn't know how much effect the cutbacks would have on his operations, though "the graduate programme has a very high priority."

He did not feel that Juliani was being treated unfairly.

Both Juliani and Green deny that there is any sort of personality clash, though Juliani claims that Green called him "contentious", and Green feels that various actions taken to retain PEAK are purely antagonistic.

Report accuses foreign faculty of indifference

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The commission's investigations revealed that graduate students and young faculty members were often dissuaded or "even scared away" from studying Canadian literature because it might "be detrimental to their prospects for advancement within the profession."

Less than 25 per cent of geography courses deal with Canadian geography; only 20

per cent of history courses deal with Canadian history; only 28 per cent of undergraduate courses in political science are oriented towards Canadian content, reveals the report.

"There are few countries in the world with a developed post-secondary education system that pay so little attention to the study of their own culture, problems and circumstances in the university curriculum," Symons writes.

The York experience

The problems associated with a large number of foreign faculty in Canadian universities, documented in the AUCC report, have not been vented by York community members, president H. Ian Macdonald said, Tuesday. This is despite the fact that only about 62 per cent of York faculty have Canadian citizenship or landed immigrant status.

The wholesale importation of foreign faculty was a "phenomenum in the 60s when York was going from zero faculty to 1,000 faculty in a short time", but it is no longer a problem, said Macdonald.

"There has been a predominance in the hiring of Canadians in at least two out of every three cases in the last few years," he said.

"There is an explicit policy in practice at York which involves advertising and a preference for any Canadian who is qualified above everyone else," he said. "The burden is on the Dean to show that no qualified Canadian is available before recommending hiring a non-Canadian."

Graduate English studies director Robert Cluett said that although he accepts the AUCC report's findings that some universities discourage graduates from studying Canadian literature, York's

graduate programme includes four graduate courses, one partial course and has a fifth full-time course in the offing.

"I can believe it happening in some of the other medieval institutions," said Cluett. "In fact, it sounds about right considering some of the colonial thinking that's around. Our experience is, however, the opposite. It may be that it is the opposite because it's one of the two or three things we do best".

Only one third of English professors in the graduate department have obtained their final degree in a Canadian university, said Cluett, although from 60 to 65 per cent of the department faculty have Canadian citizenship.

Some of these cases involve Canadians going abroad to study because as recently as 12 years ago, there were few opportunities in Canadian universities, he said.

Faculty of Arts dean Sidney Eisen reiterated that few qualified Canadian faculty were available in the mid-sixties when York and most other universities experienced a boom in enrolment and hiring.

"I'm sure that now there is a larger proportion of Canadians being hired than non-Canadians, because this is now done very carefully and deliberately," said Eisen.

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Coming Events

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Former NDP national leader David Lewis will speak in the Senior Common Room, York Hall at Glendon College on Friday March 19 from 10 to 11.30 a.m. The public is invited and admission is free.

Stop the Cutbacks rally, 8 p.m. at Convocation Hall tonight. Speakers include David Archer, Chris Harries, David Millar. Sponsored by the Coalition against the Cutbacks.

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