

Opinion

York student government should represent students and avoid party affiliation

By GARY SYMONS

This year's election campaign, held at what many feel is a critical period in the history of York student government, will have to go down in the books as the dullist of all time.

Of course, there have been the usual election shenanigans, especially the blatant and nasty smear campaign against presidential candidate Gerard Blink, but overall the hallmark of the race so far has been overwhelming apathy. Last year's campaign, by contrast, boasted an impressive array of experienced, well qualified candidates—five for president alone—and Chief Returning Officer James Cross claimed a record voter turnout. This year there are only two presidential candidates, and four of the positions for CYSF directorships were acclaimed, due, I expect, to lack of interest. We are in the embarrassing position, therefore, of having half of the election finished and won before it has even begun.

For those few, justifiably few, that are interested in who holds and who in future will hold the reins of power in York student government, this year's election reveals intriguing and even disturbing trends.

First of all, we have seen a continuation of the 'slate' approach to York politics that began last year when two groups, the Christie slate and the Walman Coalition, faced off amid a small field of independents. In itself, this is not a disturbing development, especially since the two slates proved to be no match for independent candidates running on their own merits. The Walman Coalition was shut out completely much to their own disgust, and, while the Christie slate did manage to win a few seats, they were beaten by the only independents running: Reya Ali for president, Janet Bobeckko for Internal Affairs, and Robert Castle for Academic Affairs.

However, while the slates last year were publically announced, and students could choose between independents and slate members, this year we have a slate running candidates without declaring itself as a slate. These candidates, including Vicky Fusca for President, Bryson Stokes for Finance Director, and Annita Antoniani for External Affairs, certainly haven't done anything wrong by running a campaign together, or even by not declaring themselves as a slate, but the very concept of a group running for office in a situation where that group could dominate student government does bother me.

What bothers me more is the continuing influence of party politics in student politics. The invisible slate under Fusca is, for all intents and purposes, a re-run of the Christie slate of last year that was dominated by Progressive Conservatives.

Fusca herself, while no ideologue, is a card carrying Conservative and a

former Christie slate-member; Annita Antoniani is the sister of Director of External Affairs and former Christie slate-member Sandra Antoniani; and Christie, who originally planned this year to run for Director of Finance, is not only a staunch Tory, but is also a former president of the PC's South Weston Riding Association.

Personally I have no beef with anyone of any political party or persuasion running for student government, but I would hate to see student government become a microcosm of provincial and federal politics. Student government in my opinion should represent student interests, unhindered by party affiliation.

Since Vicky Fusca has showed over the last year that her commitment to students overshadows her party affiliation, there seems to be little danger that CYSF would be dominated by partisan politics, but unfortunately, there is the risk that, in response to the increasing involvement of York P.C.s in student politics, York Liberal and NDP members will also begin to involve themselves in student government on an organized basis. The question has to be asked whether during the next few years student politics will remain independent of party affiliation, or whether it will become increasingly politicized along partisan party lines.

Another trend noted by CYSF insiders is the ability of Social and Cultural Affairs director to access votes for presidential campaigns. Because the Director of Social and Cultural Affairs has such direct access to clubs on campus, many feel he or she can also draw votes from the clubs in a subsequent political campaign. Although no one can estimate how many votes come from within the clubs, their worth as potential voting blocs has long been noted by presidential hopefuls, and current President Reya Ali's victory last year was widely credited to a combination of support from his home college of Founders and the support he garnered in his year as Director of Social and Cultural Affairs in 1984-85.

This year we have a real horse race. Fusca is bound to have done her best to sew up the clubs, and Gerard Blink, with his long-time affiliation with college level politics, probably has the advantage with the college residence vote. The winner will probably be decided by the success of both candidates in mobilizing their support, and by the always unpredictable commuter student vote, but what really bothers me is that we have this year an election fought less over issues and the real practicalities of York student politics than over a competition for group votes.

This, I hope, will not become a trend.



York safety can still be improved

By MARTIN ZARNETT

York University is a large, sprawling, suburban campus. If it were in the United States I would not be writing this article. There would be so much security that any ideas that I have would already have been implemented. But, there is a problem even though you don't hear about it.

Crime is the problem. The York campus (and Glendon's wooded campus) provides many opportunities for all types of crime; from automobile theft to sexual assault, from shoplifting to vandalism. And for every crime you hear about there are many you never do.

What is being done about crime prevention at York? Unfortunately, not as much as should be done. Recent improvements have been increased lighting in the parking lots (although that didn't deter a thief from stealing my parking pass from my locked car last September), an enhanced escort service, and greater presence of security officers and student security.

These are real improvements. They are due largely to the efforts of J.W. Santarelli who came to York University from the United Nations in New York. His wealth of experience on a tight budget has transformed a security staff that was best known for writing tickets (they still do a lot of that) to a staff that is cognizant that crime may occur on campus. I know that Santarelli sees the potential problem and action is needed now to head off problems before they begin.

This action includes the following:

1) Blue Phones - The campus must be dotted with emergency phones signified by the "blue" light. These phones would be telephone booth type and would ring straight to Emergency Services when taken off the hook. In addition, Security Services would have a board which would indicate the location of the call without the person at the other end having to identify the spot. These phones would be placed on sides of buildings, along paths, inside residences and at locations where crime is a problem.

2) Lighting - Light deters crime. Generally, criminals would like to operate in darkness where they will not be identified as easily. A number of years ago the lighting in the York parking lots was enhanced. The lighting throughout the campus must be increased and maintained.

3) Escort Service - Along with an increase in lighting, an important addition to a campus security plan is an efficient, well-staff escort service.

4) Increase the presence of Security on Campus - I'm not saying that York should become a "police state" but I would like to see an officer once in a while and not when he or she is giving me a ticket.

5) Undercover security - Because a great deal of property crimes on campus occur in places such as in residence or in the library, undercover security is needed to stop this type of crime if it is not already in place.

6) Full prosecution and University discipline against those who break laws - Unless the University prosecutes those who break laws on University property, and unless the University takes disciplinary action against those who break laws, people will use York University as a "safe harbour" to commit crimes. The administration must be willing to

fully prosecute those individuals who commit crimes on York's private property, notwithstanding occasional political pressure.

7) Crime Prevention - A crime prevention officer is badly needed to inform members of the University community about crime prevention techniques. There should be instruction to staff who work in areas where crime is most likely to occur. Seminars could be conducted for students who are also interested.

So far York has been lucky. While York needs to lower its barriers to the surrounding communities, the problematic result of doing so will mean more crime on campus. Only through preparation and prevention will York maintain the record of safety on campus that presently apparently exists.

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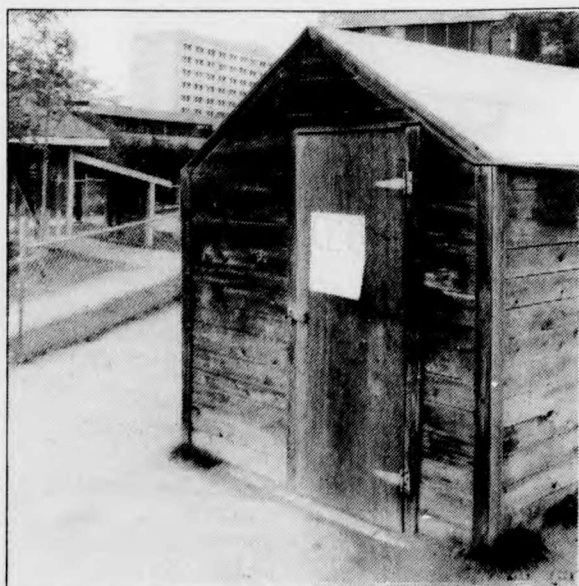
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