

Letters to the Editor

All letters should be addressed to the Editor and sent to Excalibur, Central Square, Ross Building, York University, Downsview, Ontario. Excalibur reserves the right to edit all letters more than 500 words long. Unsigned letters are the responsibility of the editors. All letters will be published however due to space limitations letters may not be published the week they are received.

Ridpath's Objectivism a threat to liberalism

I should like to point out a few of the more fundamental problems raised by the Social Science department's attempt to get rid of John Ridpath by way of cancelling the course he directs.

There is one (perhaps only one) point that both sides of the conflict agree on — both Soc. Sci. chairman Mel Hill and Ridpath noted a serious problem of non-co-operation amongst staff members. In view of the following facts, I think it is apparent where this conflict arose:

1) Ridpath's requests for various people he considered competent to teach the course were turned down.

2) Two of the people on the first year course committee that recommended the course (Soc. Sci. 175) be dropped are among those people working with (or against) Ridpath in that course.

3) The students consistently rated Ridpath as the best purveyor of ideas in the course.

Evidently, there is a serious conflict between those working with Ridpath, and the course director himself. As Hill refuses to disclose the nature of this conflict, we may only conjecture at its source. However, I don't think it is too speculative to see the problem as a conflict of basic ideas (philosophies, if you will). Ridpath, for years a student of objectivism (the philosophical system created by Ayn Rand), is no doubt dangerous to the liberal and leftist status quo in the social sciences. Rather than attempt to meet his ideas with arguments (a difficult task given the superiority in teaching techniques), the Soc. Sci. department has chosen to silence Ridpath by taking away his chance to be heard.

There is also a psychological (as well as ideological) factor involved in this conflict. Excalibur's editorial mentioned in passing the chronic inferiority present on the podiums of the Soc. Sci. classes in recent years. Ridpath, like any capable, knowledgeable person is a serious threat to entrenched mediocrity and moral grayness. Silence him, say the diluted and we won't look quite so bad. Nor will the students be able to see just what education could be like.

If mediocrity and diluted decadence are not to completely neutralize the exchange of ideas necessary for education, Ridpath and Soc. Sci. 175, must be maintained at all costs.

J.G. Lennox
York IV
Honors Philosophy
Vanier

Soc. Sci. chairman is a political exile

Being a student of Social Science professor Mel Hill's was one of the rare intellectually exciting experiences of my student life here at York. However, the fact that I personally respect and admire Mel may not be of much moment to students trying to grasp the issues involved in the John Ridpath affair. Of even less help is the intemperate distortion of the series of mindless slogans which passes for "informed" comment in Excalibur.

Hill is a South African who is excluded from his own country for political reasons. It may be that "white racists" are being thrown out by the South African government; I rather thought they were cherished. In these circumstances, your reference to Rhodesia is slightly more barbarous than your usual level of automated vulgarity.

I personally know nothing of Ridpath. Less dewy-eyed students tell me he is an admirer of Ayn Rand. You might ask him if this is the case. Then, perhaps, one of your literate staffers — don't panic, it's not a very high level — might even find some material to which another of your favorite epithets — fascist — could be applied as something other than mere reflex.

The deficiencies and disasters of university life are not going to yield to gut-reaction journalese. The defect of the products of gut reactions is that they are all so depressingly uniform. A crap is a crap is a crap.

Mary O'Brien
Graduate student, Political Science

Ridpath's firing is a mistake — ta

With respect to a recent controversy concerning a member of your division as well as the Economics department, John Ridpath, I should like to submit the following comments.

I have worked intimately with Ridpath in the administration of Economics 201 and I have found him to have a most realistic expectation of contributions from supportative members associated with his course as well as an appreciative awareness of their assistance; this would lead me to question any contention that he is not a competent administrator although this may not be one of the items you are considering.

Furthermore his interest in the whole area of social science has, I have found, made him one of the more well-read faculty in this institution of higher learning, and has acted as an intellectual stimulus to myself as well as to students who have sought him and with whom I have come in contact. This certainly is an asset to any department which is trying to induce a broad perspective in youth seeking the educational experience.

Finally, I can report from conversations which I have had with students in Economics 201, that although they find the material "dry", the manner of presentation used by Ridpath facilitates their comprehension and is as stimulating as could be expected and his willingness to talk to students after class on points which they have not fully grasped would, if nought else, indicate a teacher who is interested in communicating to his students. This is certainly a most vital (although often missing) feature in the York educational "factory".

I would ask therefore that you consider the position of Mr. Ridpath in your department most fully and as a consequence thereof, I'm sure that you will find it most inappropriate to lose such an individual.

Richard H. Fosbrooke
Teaching assistant,
Department of Economics

Smear and innuendo won't do for Ridpath

I am concerned to hear that professor John Ridpath (Social Science 175) is to be dropped from York faculty, on the excuse that he is incompetent (!) and that his course is too general. Though not presently a student, I am an alumnus of U of T (67); and I attended non-credit lectures Ridpath gave at York in early 1970, on the History of Western Philosophy. I will vouch unhesitatingly for his teaching merits; but the issue involves academic freedom as well.

Ridpath is rare among teachers because he explains difficult ideas in a way that even a novice can grasp clearly — i.e., he actually teaches. If public education funds are being cut, the rational procedure is to sack those who don't do what they're paid for — not those who fulfil their responsibilities.

But besides covering assigned courses, Ridpath shows how they relate to other areas of life — making education a part of life, not apart from it. To teach a course well, is to make it relevant, as well as clear; and making the social sciences relevant, requires the wide-ranging interests of a man like Prof. Ridpath. How then to justify ac-

cusations of incompetence?

The fact that Ridpath enjoys teaching, helps explain both his quality and his popularity. According to the March 23 Excalibur, student course evaluations consider him the best teacher in Soc.Sci.; 56 percent rate his tutorials, and 25 percent his lectures, as excellent; and 50 percent of his students think Soc.Sci. 175 has good to excellent potential. Votes prove nothing but his popularity; but if his popularity is ignored, then student course evaluation is a paper hypocrisy.

Now Ridpath is an avowedly serious student and adherent of the philosophy of Ann Rand; in fact, it's no exaggeration to say he's more familiar with her philosophy than any other Toronto resident. Ayn Rand's intransigent individualism and advocacy of capitalism, is unlikely to sit well with those whose prestige and material sustenance depend on a government educational monopoly. This raises the issue of whether, under such a monopoly, academic freedom is at all possible.

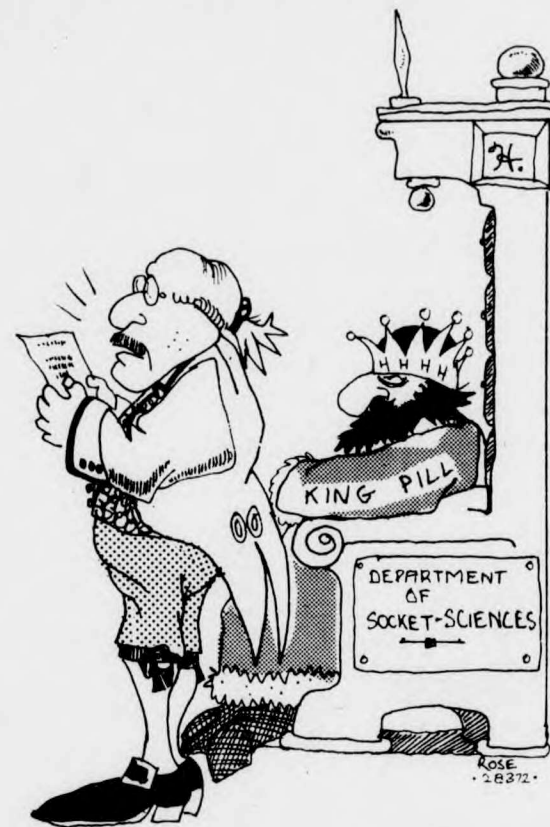
Your front-page article last week says that some Soc.Sci. faculty members have leveled accusations against Ridpath, which department chairman Melvyn Hill refuses to make public. If the accusers have anything to say that needs saying, why do they not do so openly? Smear and innuendo, once the stock-in-trade of demagogues, and yellow journalists, appear to have acquired an aura of academic respectability.

Evidently Ridpath is unpopular with some of his colleagues; and whatever their motives, their methods speak with disturbing eloquence. The attempt to cashier Ridpath is without plausible excuse; it is hypocritical, cowardly and unfair. When such behaviour is tolerated in a university, it becomes plain that something is fundamentally rotten with our educational system; and it is time for everyone to wake up and take notice.

Eric Layman

Clear thinking needed on non-union labor

I was disappointed by the inaccurate headlines and incomplete reporting in last week's Excalibur



...and furthermore, the department does not see how a professor's teaching capacities affect his chances for being rehired. . . ."

on matters we had discussed, in particular relating to the provision of cleaning services. On the one hand, I did not make any reference to the use of non-union labor. On the other hand, I made a strong point of the need to relate wage rates with standards of service and noted that university-union meetings in recent months had given evidence of a genuine desire of both parties to strive for the well-being of York.

The financial limitations facing York pose difficult problems which will not be solved by simplistic or distorted statements. It is my conviction that the present crisis

demands clear thinking on the part of all concerned with York's future to ensure an understanding of the present situation and future alternatives as a prerequisite to realistic solutions.

I am pleased to learn that a future issue of Excalibur will endeavour to provide information which will be of assistance in developing such understanding. Might I suggest an appropriate headline would be "York community seeks efficient use of limited resources to further academic goals".

Bill Small
Vice-president, administration

More letters on p. 12

Please Mr. Dennison, give us more cycle paths

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

More and more people are rediscovering cycling. Unfortunately, for those who live in Toronto, there are too few places where they can enjoy it.

The streets are filled with traffic. And except for one or two parks, the paths are too few and too short.

There are many areas throughout the city that could be easily and inexpensively de-

veloped as fine cycle routes.

With your support Mr. Paul Kent of Bloor Cycle will make a presentation to Mayor William Dennison on behalf of all Toronto bicycle owners. He will make Metro Council aware of the needs of cyclists, and the possibilities for development.

Fill out the coupon above today, and send it to:

bloor cycle

MR. PAUL KENT, 1169 BLOOR STREET WEST, TORONTO 4, ONT.