

Student Federation Notes

This past Monday night, the Council of the York Student Federation Inc. held its Annual Budget Debate. In a pleasant departure from the past, forty-two people from organizations all over campus appeared before the Council to make presenta-

tions on behalf of their groups. CYSF would like to sincerely thank each of these representatives for their concern and their participation in the budgetary process. The 1979-80 budget will be formally passed at the next CYSF meeting, November 6.

Nominations closed this past Friday for three vacant positions on the Council, and two were filled. University-wide, Andrea Doucet of Bethune was acclaimed as the second student representative on the Board of

Governors. The first holder of the newly-created position of CYSF, Vice-President of Women's Affairs, is Jennifer Gonsalves, who was also acclaimed. The position of Vice-President of University Services remains open, and a by-election will be held next month to fill it.

The CYSF Classic Film Festival continues tonight with "The Exorcist," starring Ellen Burstyn and Linda Blair.

D. Keith Smockum

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Editorial

Good advice

As sure as leaves fall at this time of year, so, it seems, does Harbinger's budget. Three years ago, student council grants to Harbinger amounted to \$13,000. Two years ago, the total was \$6,800 and last year, \$4,300. That's a devastating reduction and indicates how misinformed York students are about Harbinger.

For those who are unaware, Harbinger is York's peer counselling centre located in MacLaughlin College. It is staffed by two paid coordinators and 22 volunteers who offer information on birth control, VD, abortion, nutrition, adoption, drug and alcohol abuse, sexuality, and pre- and post-natal care.

Historically, Harbinger dates back to the great demographic explosion of the sixties when the number of fourteen-to-twenty-four-year olds in North America increased by 50 per cent. At that time young people turned more and more to one another for guidance and the youth culture emerged as a major socializing force. The responsibilities of parents, teachers and clinicians were increasingly overtaken by their children. Peer counselling became a substitute for guidance previously offered in many areas by professional counsellors.

A decade later, peer counselling remains a valuable alternative. Many of the "problems" dealt with by Harbinger are entirely appropriate to peer guidance. To give but one example, Harbinger provides an unthreatening place for gay people who are 'coming out'. While not a dilemma in the conventional psychiatric sense, it is often a difficult process finding a new social identity. Harbinger not only has gay counsellors on staff, but is linked to other gay groups on and off campus.

Last year, over 1,600 individuals consulted Harbinger. Among those were people referred by professionals from York's Health Services and the Counselling and Development Centre. In addition, Harbinger provided beginning opportunities for students seeking careers in counselling.

Excalibur urges York's student councils to reverse the downward trend in Harbinger's funding before it's too late. We support the proposal made at Monday's Student Federation meeting to up this year's grant by \$1,000.

While most of us won't need the help of a counselling centre, for the minority of people who will, Harbinger is an essential service. The quality of social life at York is enhanced not only by sponsoring discos, pubs and movies, but by maintaining the support that will keep Harbinger's doors open.

YORK UNIONS

The annual breakdown in contract negotiations between the Graduate Assistants Association (GAA) and the University administration has just occurred. Every year at about this time, the GAA is forced to file for conciliation as the only viable way of keeping talks going.

The GAA is the union that represents several hundred part-time faculty and graduate teaching assistants on campus. Our union members do much of the tutoring and grading in, for example, large first-year Humanities and Social Science courses. The union attempts to negotiate with the university on wages and benefits, working conditions, grievance and arbitration procedures, and seniority (i.e., in what order do people get hired and fired).

In this year's negotiations the two parties are at odds over wages, sick leave, academic freedom, seniority for part-timers, and the question of how graduate teaching assistantships should be allocated.

The wage issue is quite simple. The union has been offered a wages packet that averages out to a 5.9 per cent increase over last year. The official rate of inflation is at 9 per cent per year, which makes the University's offer obviously quite unacceptable, not to mention that most of our members are in the 'relatively deprived' sector of the labour force.

On the matter of sick leave, the University argues that good faith alone is needed. We are not so sure, and at least one of the University's own negotiators agrees with us. He said that he might well reconsider working at York if his freedom to take sick leave were dependent on the 'largesse of the University'.

The most important issue on which the two parties are divided is probably the question of seniority for part-timers and some security for teaching assistants. Would-be graduate stu-

dents at York University should reflect on the fact that, at present, there is absolutely no guarantee that they will get any financial support from York or that, if offered an initial TA as bait, they will get support for more than one year. We wanted contract language that would assure those given an initial TA at least three more in their years at York.

After an 'Extraordinary Meeting' with some graduate faculty heads we thought that there had been agreement on that issue. On Friday, however, the University negotiators said 'no'. They have acknowledged that our position is 'moral' and 'honourable' on this issue but they appear unwilling to allow any inroads into their 'flexibility' (read: arbitrariness) in this area.

Over the whole time-consuming and frustrating process hangs the pall of a comment made by Don Mitchell, the University's chief negotiator, at the last session before talks broke down: 'The Union is under the mistaken impression that negotiating means that the University has to change its position during negotiations.' How naive we are! We find Mitchell's comment a depressing reminder of words spoken by one of Canada's top arbitrators, Patrick Hart. Speaking on a nation-wide radio show last year, he said, 'The main problem in public sector negotiations is the refusal of management to bargain in good faith.'

We sincerely hope that it will not be necessary to man any barricades in our struggle to win a reasonable contract from the University. As part of our campaign to involve as many of York's members as possible in our cause, we will be holding an information picket on November 7th.

For further information or if you think you could help us, please contact the Union office at 129 MacLaughlin College (tel. 667-6341).

Tony Woolfson