

EDITORIAL

Touchy Royals

Good heavens! What an outrage! Did the man know what he was doing? Ontario's Transportation Minister James Snow had the audacity to touch the Queen "several times" during a weekend visit to Amherstville, Ontario.

The report states that Snow "...guided the Queen by the elbow and touched her back," thus contravening etiquette - no one shall touch the Queen unless she first offers her hand. Naturally, the Queen was "stony-faced" and "furious". These people are all touched.

Britain's tabloid press and regal eagles exploded with outrage over the disgraceful familiarity demonstrated by this ignorant, colonial commoner.

It's all so predictable and so useless. Royalty has returned for its triennial whirlwind tour, at the behest of our loyal government, to boost morale and mollify the peasant in the number one colony.

Most Canadians react with bewilderment as the royal party invades the St. Lawrence Seaway, waving to the crowds and stopping to chat at frequent intervals. There isn't a politician that can work a crowd as well as these folks.

The royal visit and this silly touching episode confirms our suspicions: The monarchy is an institution that has lost its relevance to Canadians. These tours bring out the curious and the celebrity seekers. And these people are major celebrities.

Our connection with the monarchy is, however, diminishing. More and more, they are simply visitors from abroad. And the controversy of Mr. Snow touching the queen emphasizes the growing feeling that Canadians do not share the British sentiment that form supersedes substance.

Canadians are quite capable of providing national symbols that will serve to unite and boost the morale of the citizenry.

The Queen is lucky the Conservatives were elected and not John Turner and the Liberals. With a 'tactile politician' at the helm, a pat on the royal rump may have had the Royal Navy sailing.

Neal Watson

Capital thoughts

Let's explore the death penalty.

Three police officers have been killed in the past month, and the cry for revenge is rising from the right-wing herd that recently elected Brian Mulroney.

The masses cry out for justice (ie. revenge). Without our symbolic sacrifice to assuage the victim's immediate and extended families, the desire to remove the killer from this world will continue unabated. All this anger, based on the assumption that a murderer is a murderer, regardless of the circumstance. The assumption is false.

At least three types of murder are known to exist. In the first case, the crime of passion, murder is committed by a person who knows the victim. The crime is characterized by its spontaneity, the use of the nearest available object as a weapon, and the violence of the death. Persons who carry out crimes of passion are rarely repeat offenders. Most are no longer threats to society after the event.

A second group of killers plots its deeds, and methodically carries out its schedules of death.

The third set of murderers are the Olsens of the world. Their killings are frequently serial in nature, and are carried out on victims selected by whim and chance.

There is a clear threat to society from persons in the last two categories. They have, for reasons that are rather murky, decided to deliberately take the life of another member of society. It is rarely a question of the assailant's guilt: it is a question of their fate that divides our society.

Persons who kill methodically, or by whim clearly must be punished.

But is the murder of these persons by society the correct response?

Not all societies punish the killer. Some societies permit the aggrieved parties to exact punishment or compensation from the family of the murderer. Many ancient civilizations settled the problem of murder through the use of sacrificial victims.

Those persons who cry out against capital punishment must provide a means for society to release its anger. Killing the killer is our current ritual for dissipating the common rage against the transgressor. The present law abolishing the death penalty has forgotten ritual and left us in limbo, without a release for our pain.

Denial of a ritual fosters vigilantism and anarchy.

It's time to consider the options. The vigilantes are on the move.

John Algard



WE ARE EVER SO PLEASED WITH OUR SOJOURN ACROSS CANADA. IT WAS TRULY GRAND. HOWEVER, IF THAT MR. SNOW TOUCHES US AGAIN, NOT ONLY SHALL WE NOT BE AMUSED, WE SHALL RIP OFF HIS HAND AND SERVE IT TO THE ROYAL CORGIES!

LETTERS TO THE EDITORS

Tenure revisited

John Algard's recent editorial against the institution of tenure trots out many commonly held misconceptions and therefore must not go unchallenged.

One fallacy about tenure, repeated by Algard, is that the political climate which originally necessitated the creation of tenure no longer exists. From that, I would conclude that tenure has dealt admirably with attempted encroachments on academic freedom, and so should be retained. There is no doubt in my mind that if tenure were abolished, we would inevitably return to the era of the 30's, 40's (and even 50's), when arbitrary dismissal of professors was frighteningly common (for an excellent review of some classical case histories in Canada, see a special report: "The good old days: a 'golden age' of academic freedom" published in the Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT) Bulletin October 1983).

Algard's argument for the abolition of tenure on economic grounds is pure silliness. All of the economic difficulties he alludes to are totally unrelated to the issue of tenure. But for the record, every year since at least 1977, the cost of living adjustment to the academic staffs' salary scale has been substantially below the percent increase to the University's base budget, not to mention below the real increase in cost of living. Although this may be partially offset by salary increases due to advancement through the ranks, only professors who carry out their teaching and research duties conscientiously earn this merit increment, not the "dead wood." No Mr. Algard, regarding causes for the University's economic woes, one must look elsewhere for a scapegoat.

What about our "incompetent laggards," as Algard refers to them? Every profession, even those not enjoying a formal system of tenure, has a few members who perform below the acceptable standard. In no pronouncement against tenure that I have heard, has it yet been demonstrated, first, that the

professoriate shields an unusually high proportion of indolent members among its ranks, and secondly, that tenure has anything to do with their neglect. My guess is that the few individuals who abuse the privilege of tenure receive a disproportionate amount of publicity from the media.

Nevertheless, the point is well taken; perhaps if the University appeared more diligent in confronting the few who do abuse tenure, one could cure the disease without killing the patient.

Tenure does not imply a guaranteed income for life. Any professor, tenured or otherwise, risks losing his contract if it can be reasonably substantiated that he is unacceptably deficient in the performance of his duties. To be sure, the deficiency must be important and reasonably chronic before tenure will be stripped. The essential point, however, is that no staff member has a legal right to a guaranteed income by virtue of his tenure.

Tenure should not be abolished. All professions in our society enjoy a considerable degree of "job security," and most of them attain their "tenure" far sooner than the 5 years generally required in our profession. Academic freedom remains, to this day, the single most important benefit that accrues from tenure. In his introduction to the CAUT special report mentioned above, Donald Savage (Executive Secretary of the CAUT) refers to one of the celebrated Canadian case histories involving a most blatant attack on academic freedom in the late 1950's. An investigator of the case found that one of the reasons for the professor's dismissal was that "he was not sufficiently complaisant, not servile enough in thought and attitude..." We must all remain vigilant so that those days never return.

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Don Teplyske has run off again and John Charles and Kerry Hoffer really don't miss him. Jim Herbert asked Elisabeth Eid if Greg Owens had seen Don but she laughed and suggested that he ask Melanie Klimchuk and Michael MacRae. Where was Don all this time? Bernie Poitras knew but wasn't telling and Neil Fenna giggled hysterically at the very mention of Don's name. We found Don a little later in a cave having fun with Stuart Lemoire, Doug Bird, Shane Berg and, of course, Jim Moore, Linda Derksen and Janine McDade.