

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 All letters will be published however due to space limitations letters may not be published the week they are received.

Jean Cottam

My case proves there's discrimination here

Jean Cottam is a Phd graduate who charged Atkinson's history department with discrimination against hiring Canadians.

The second letter was addressed to Daniel Hill, chairman of the Ontario Human Rights Commission (which investigated the case) after the commission cleared Atkinson of the charge.

A demanding full-time position in business as well as part-time translating for the secretary of state, in addition to preparing a political biography for publication and looking after two children in their early 'teens — all this does not leave me with much leisure to pursue other activities.

I am fully satisfied, however, that I have proven to the Ontario Government (and other interested parties) what I had intended to prove, that is the nature of the discrimination in Canadian academic hiring and the inability of the Ontario Human Rights Commission to remedy such discrimination. I attach herewith a pertinent letter which I had sent to Dr. Hill, the Director of the Commission, to be cited below.

I am very proud of the role I had played in 1971, on behalf of Canadian university graduates — whether male or female — in the struggle to remedy discrimination against them in Canadian academic hiring. I know that henceforward, due in part to my activities. Canadian Phd graduates and candidates will be treated with greater consideration than has been the case in the past. I received several tributes to this effect.

K. Jean Cottam

Nov. 23

Dear Mr. Hill:

Thank you for your letter of Oct. 29, 1971.

Although I am satisfied that your investigation was indeed thorough, you failed to convince me that the successful candidate had won the position solely on his merits.

The fact that my name was not recommended at the initial screening by the committee of six at Atkinson College does not surprise me at all. Other Canadian university graduates were denied a hearing as well. (Altogether 16 Canadians applied, no doubt including a number of Canadian university graduates, in addition to myself.) Both short-listed Canadian candidates graduated from American universities; hence, they were graded according to American standards and received letters of recommendation from American referees. I consider this extremely significant!

I realize that by its terms of reference the Commission is precluded from remedying this kind of discrimination. However, I find it highly significant, too, that you did not even bother to spell out to me the criteria established for the position.

I am well aware that the faculty at Atkinson College is generally now making an effort to hire Canadians, having come under attack on this issue in the past. However, I am not in the least convinced that the hiring committee in question went out of their way "aggressively to seek out Canadian talent," in keeping with York president David Slater's position on the matter and in terms of my outstanding qualifications.

K. J. Cottam, Phd
University of Toronto

Mass failure in Econ 201, charges student

In the December examination, over 50 percent of the students enrolled in Economics 201 failed in the course. I am one of the students who failed and I wish to question the ulterior motives behind this policy of mass failure.

Unconfirmed sources indicate that this is the decided policy of the economics department. As Economics 201 is the prerequisite for entry into third- and fourth-year Economic courses and that this year over 400 students have enrolled in this course, this means that many students intend to major in economics in their second and subsequent years. With its limited teaching staff, the economics department may face the danger of having inadequate staff to absorb all the students. By failing over half of the students, a majority of students who might otherwise have majored in Economics will be barred from doing so. Thus, the problem of understaff is solved.

If this is the motive behind, then I would say that both the university and economics department are failing in their duty towards the students and also towards the general public. If a student wishes to major in a certain subject, e.g. Economics, he should be given every encouragement to do so. If the department is under-staffed, more staff should be recruited. It is just inconceivable that the students should be prevented from pursuing the course of their wish simply because of the staffing problems. By doing so, the whole purpose of university education breaks down.

If this mass failure is not the policy of the Economics department, then there must be something wrong with either the content of the course or the professor concerned. All students accepted into York are deemed eligible to pursue the prescribed course of study and the fact that they are allowed to enter into the second year is testimony to the fact that their first-year work has been considered satisfactory. It is just unthinkable that over 50 percent of the students should fail in a particular subject.

As a result of this mass failure policy, many students enrolled in Economic 201 are sadly disillusioned and frustrated. In the interest of the students, I hope either the faculty of arts dean, John Saywell, or the Economics chairman Graeme McKechnie will conduct an inquiry into the reasons or motives behind this policy of mass failure. I hope they will give a public explanation on the matter.

James Louey

Economics 201 professor John Redpath gave no fall failure figures but says he expects less than 20 percent of students taking the course to fail it by spring. Last year, 21 percent did, and the year before, 23.1 percent. He felt the high failure rate comes when students aren't prepared a "tough" course and when they try and fail to memorize long chains of logic instead of learning basic principles. He says the high failure rate is improving but stresses this is no new phenomenon. — ed.

WASPS racist? says director

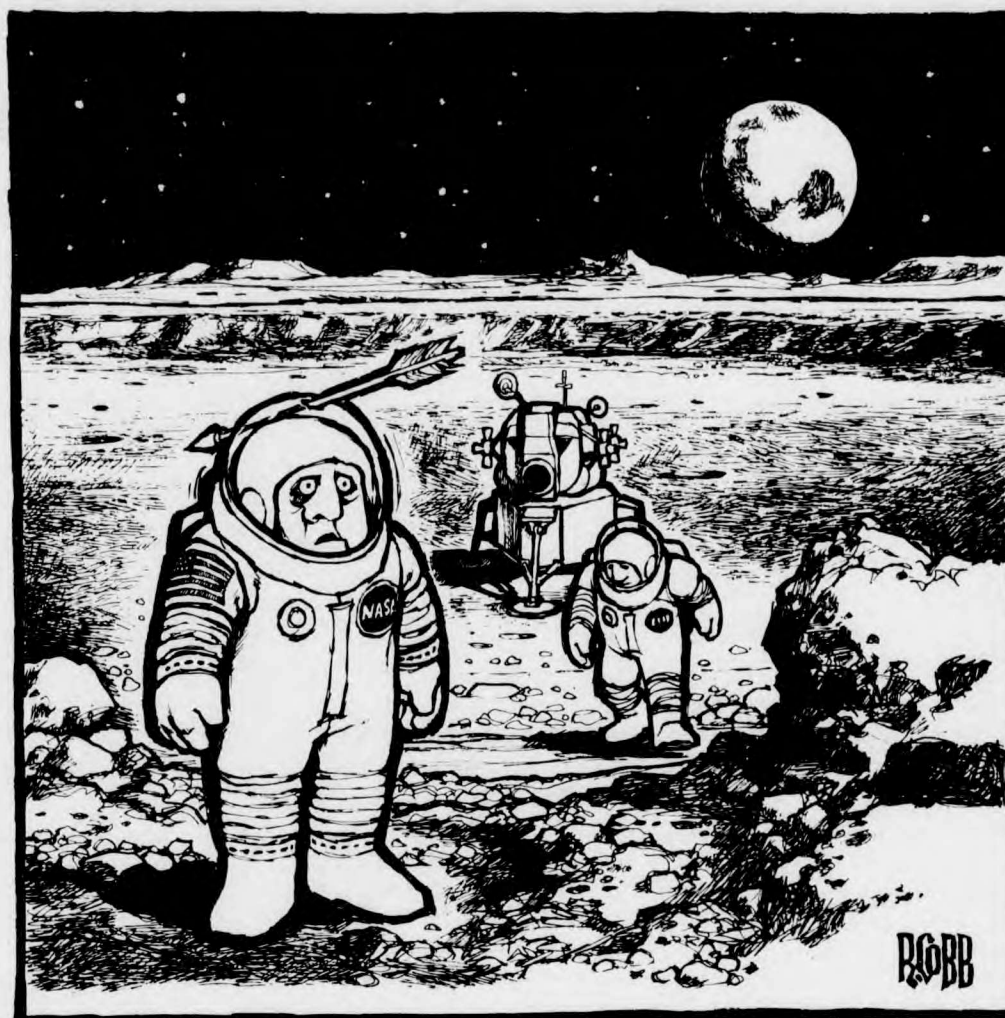
Last week the Black People's Movement submitted a letter claiming that our production of The WASPS was racist. I don't intend to start a prolonged debate or arouse any kind of controversy, I only wish to clear up a misunderstanding or at least present a counter argument for Excalibur readers.

We were accused of racism in painting two characters in blackface and putting them in large, floppy black feet. We simply played them as black-faced minstrels within part of a cultural tradition. This tradition typed a whole race and made it into a collection of stupid, shuffling and bungling clowns. By playing the characters black we intended to exploit that tradition and send up the whole attitude.

Just as no one can take Al Jolson or Eddie Cantor prancing around in blackface seriously, I didn't expect anyone could take our production as anything but a mockery of racism. I intended the audience to laugh at the type — the minstrel clown — that the tradition produced and thereby laugh at the tradition itself.

It is interesting that the Black People's Movement failed to notice that all the characters in the play were played similarly — as clowns. No mention was made in their letter of these other characters and particularly of their make-up. Drawing upon the same burlesque tradition, they were all painted in white with large red mouths extending to the nose and were wearing large, oversized shoes and baggy costumes. They were played, just as the blackfaced characters, as stupid, shuffling and bungling clowns.

I don't understand how clowns in black make-up are construed as examples of racism while at the same time clowns in white make-up whose WASPish attitudes were the centre of the play can be simply ignored. And as far as I know most of our audiences, white and black, accepted all of these characters no matter what color their make-up, as basically



the same: as clowns. I'm not saying everyone enjoyed the production, but in most cases racism was not the problem.

Jim Purdy

Director, The WASPS

WASPS like All in the Family

This letter is in reference to the letter on the play WASPS, (created by one of the world's greatest playwrights, Aristophanes) written by the chairman of the Black People's Movement, Patrick Hunter.

He feels that blacks were treated unfairly in WASPS. Maybe he is right, maybe he is not, who am I to criticize?

But if he is going to criticize WASPS, he may as well criticize one of tv's most popular shows, All in the Family.

Surely Hunter can see the obvious racism portrayed by the loveable bigot, Archie Bunker and surely he must criticize the blatant racist attitude portrayed on the show. But I would like to see Hunter take a shot at the writers of All in the Family. Good luck! You will certainly need more than that, Mr. Hunter if you intend to spread this view to other members of the Black People's Movement.

David F. Andrews

Why ULS against unborn foetus?

On Friday evening, we in the Graduate Residences received a printed copy of the "United Left Slate's" platform for the upcoming CYSF election urging us to vote Belfont for president of the CYSF.

As I read through the material, a few questions came to my mind: "If the United Left Slate is so much against defense research and killing (i.e. the children of Vietnam), why is it that they also support the murder of an unborn human being — alive in the womb? Whose body (life) is really being tampered with?"

Rose Floyd

T-D bank unsafe in its procedures

Depositors in our branch of the Toronto-Dominion Bank should be warned that their money is not secure. Having observed the manner in which this branch is using its computer, two of us conducted a small experiment. One of us withdrew money on his own signature from the savings account of the other. If you too want to do this, simply insert on the withdrawal slip the number of someone else's account, sign your own name and present the withdrawal slip at the bank for cash. If you wish to withdraw a largish sum, you may not need it. From our experiment, and from observation, the bank is not even comparing the name on an account with the name on a corresponding withdrawal slip, let alone comparing signatures.

It is also possible to invade the account of a campus group. Simply tell the bank that you have recently been authorized by the group to write cheques on its account, sign the statement that will then be presented to you by the bank and make your withdrawal. The bank will not check with the group to find out whether or not you are lying.

We submit that this branch of the Toronto-Dominion Bank is negligent. While it is true that anyone engaging in the illegal acts just described would be subject to prosecution, a less negligent bank would adopt procedures which are less tempting. Less tempting procedures can be found.

Each teller could be supplied with xerox specimen signatures for all accounts in an easy reference form. And of course, a withdrawal unaccompanied by a passbook should require firm identification. Further, those persons who open a campus group account and thereby are authorized to make withdrawals should not be changed unless their approval is obtained or a designated university officer instructs the bank to make the change. In any event, do not lose your passbook.

J. Buttrick
B. Ness-Jack
P. Howell

Scott library is trying harder

The Scott Library does have problems. We do not have enough copies of some books, books do get stolen and all the rest are out to someone else. These are perennial problems, and we are trying to solve them by buying extra copies and by proposing a variant loan period which would allow the most used books to circulate for one week only.

However, I do not think the "general population" borrowing books is a problem. The Extramural Reader pays a deposit fee of \$10 which is not returned to him until his record has been cleared in the circulation department. He may borrow only two books at one time and cannot take out titles on reserve.

The number of valid Extramural Reader cards is now 158. The total loans from July-December 1971 were 597 or an average of 94.5 per month. Hardly gigantic in a system where the daily loans are over 1,500. Extramural readers are adults with a demonstrated need for material not available in their public or special library.

I realize you have library difficulties as do many others. Please come and see me anytime to complain and bring your friends (the office will hold about six people comfortably) Office Number 203D, telephone 635-3054.

Joan Carruthers
Assistant director for Scott Library