

editorial

Metric muddle

The Metric System.
Those three words have caused more minor-league controversy in recent years than any issue since the introduction of fluoridated water. The most recent development came Tuesday when the federal Government announced that the compulsory use of the metric system in retail sales will be suspended. The suspension will be in effect while the Government appeals a recent anti-metric decision by an Ontario Provincial Court judge.

The decision is just the latest in a long line of setbacks the Government has faced in its metric conversion drive, and perhaps the most surprising one. When the Government first published its *White Paper on Metric Conversion* almost 14 years ago, it somehow hoped that metric would catch on voluntarily. As it turned out, the government severely misjudged the public's resistance to change.

But despite the Liberals' best intentions, the mobs are still fuming. You can buy gas in gallons at an Ottawa service station run by Conservative MPs. Imperial equivalents are almost universal in Canadian newspapers and magazines. And Nova Scotia Premier John Buchanan has announced that, as a result of this week's decision, road signs with distances in miles would be going back up in parts of his province.

It all seems rather absurd.
What is it that makes otherwise reasonable, ordinary, folks-down-the-street fly into a rage over an issue of such relative unimportance?

"It's being shoved down our throat," they say. "It causes plane crashes." "It's a big waste of money."

It's a big waste of time to fight change. Even as we quibble over the gallon and the litre, those just a few years younger would be lost with a yard-stick in hand. It's clear that we're in the inevitable state of transition—just like those who adopted the concept of standardized time zones in the late 1800s, against great opposition.

And those who continue to fight are somehow missing the point entirely. We wish they would take all their energy and influence and use them more constructively.

excalibur

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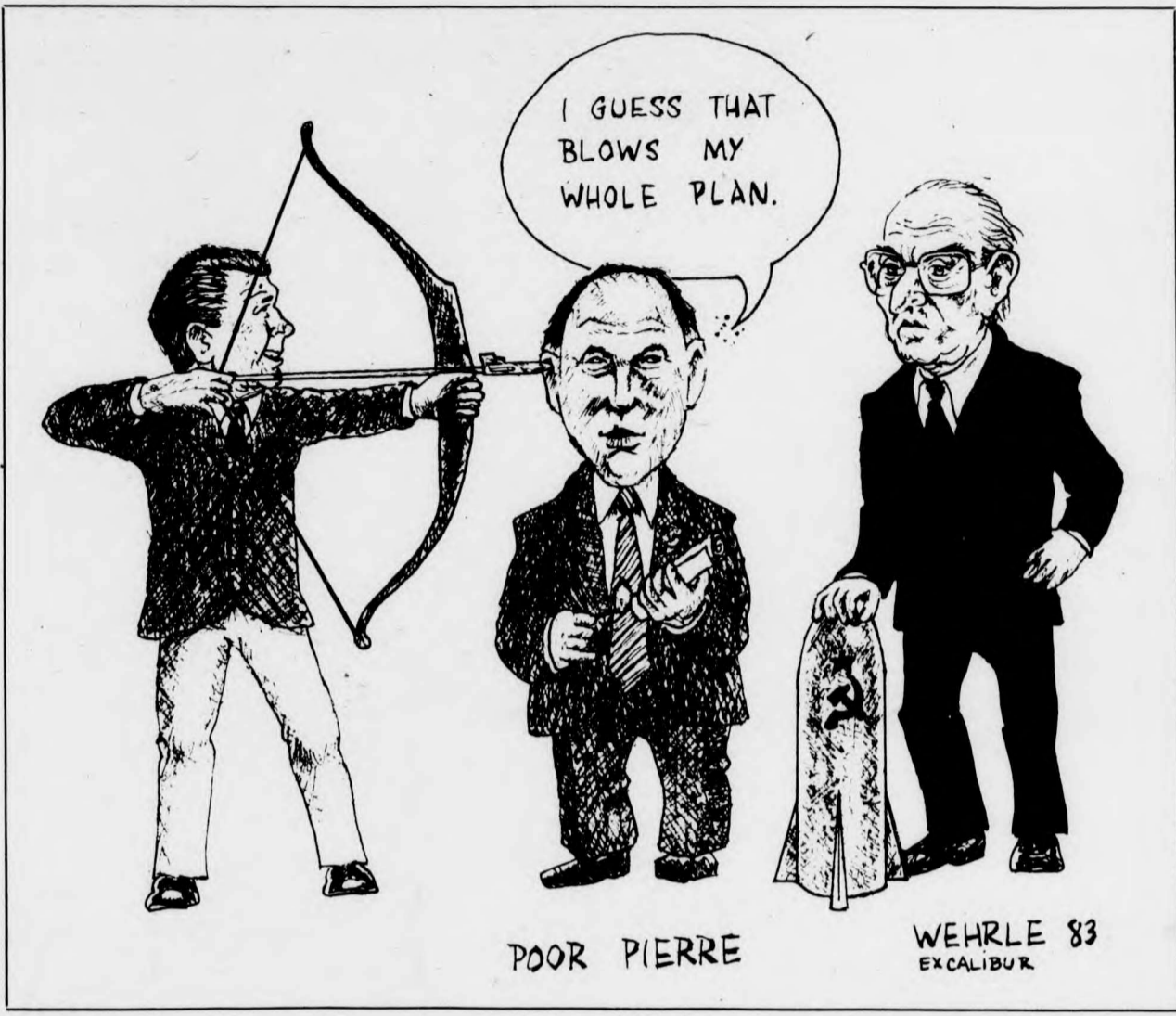
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Journalism is the ability to meet the challenge of filling space.
—Rebecca West



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letters

Excalibur attempts to print as many letters as space allows. Please be brief—letters over 250 words are subject to editing for length. All letters must include the author's name, address, and phone number for verification purposes. Pseudonyms may be used upon request.

Bearpit plea

Editor:
This letter is a plea to all York students who oppose the University's ban on the use of the Bearpits for public speaking. We all know that we are at York to learn, and while much of our education is channeled through our classes, the exchange of ideas and opinions plays an equally important role in achieving this end.

The Faculty of Arts Student Caucus set up a special committee to look into the closing of the Bearpits, and our findings have led us to the conclusion that the University is acting without sufficient justification. Apparently, public speaking in the Bearpits poses a fire hazard due to the crowds that line the halls of Central Square during the first week of classes? Is this less of a fire hazard? York University is 24 years old, and I find the fire hazard excuse unacceptable after such a long period of time.

More importantly, however, is the fact that there are no suitable alternatives (as yet) to the Bearpits. Having a speaker in a lecture hall does not compare to having one in the Bearpits. The attraction and vitality of the Bearpits stem from their central location. There is no other place on campus that offers the same amount of impact on so many students.

The Bearpits are not just good places to express and hear the ideas and views that really affect us, they are the only ones. The Faculty of Arts Student Caucus totally opposes the ban that has been placed on the Bearpits. We hope that you appreciate our concern, and will also take a stand against this censorship of our ideas.

—Owen Wigderson
Chairman
Faculty of Arts Student Caucus

Holmes support

Editor:
Re: "York professor fighting denial of tenure," *Excalibur*, November 10, 1983.
We were pleased to learn that YUFA has decided to back the grievance filed by Prof. Chris Holmes. Hopefully this will lead to a reexamination of the value of Prof. Holmes as a member of the Psychology Department here at York.

We would like to make it clear that from our experience there are a great many students who applaud his teaching style. Prof. Holmes has the ability to take material which is cut and dry and present it in a form which is interesting to the student. We have found that he is very approachable and willing to go out of his way to discuss any difficulties. This approachability is facilitated by his openness and good rapport with students. Prof. Holmes actively encourages his students to engage in self study, in order to better comprehend the relevance of psychology to one's personal development. It is this unique perspective as well as his concern with the hitherto ignored regions of the discipline (mystical-spiritual teachings) which adds to the enrichment of the psychology student's education here at York.
It is our hope that the students' views on this matter will not go unheard.
—Ted Vokes, Lorne Mitchell
Stephan Yarmus, and 73 others

Costly salad

Editor:
Recently, I had to stay late at York, and so dropped into the Founders cafeteria for a light meal. Spying the salad bar, I thought I had found nutrition and aesthetics in one inexpensive plate. Was I surprised when the cashier "weighed in" my plate at nearly \$6! Now it was not the largest plate of salad I had ever seen, I've eaten larger ones at Frank Vetere's, so I fail to see how the university can justify such pricing. Undoubtedly, there are other pressing issues to be raised in this forum, but the price of food is an issue that affects nearly everyone at York, and particularly those most in need.

Presumably, the university food system is designed to provide nutritious food at less than commercial prices. But I don't know any restaurant in town, much less any cafeteria, that charges six dollars for a plate of salad. If you'll pardon the pun, I can't stomach the idea of York University charging students more for food than they would have to pay off-campus. Who makes these pricing decisions, and is there any means of redress?

—Jake Brooks

Porn rebuttal

Editor:
The response that my letter ("Pornography", *Excalibur*, 10 Nov.), received quite astounds me. Being labeled "dumb," "shallow," "flippant," "insulting," and "limited in knowledge" doesn't bother me half so much as the claims being made about my being "in the defense of pornography." Perhaps by reinstating my initial point I can erase any false notions.

My point is that what appears to be the woman's outcry of indignance and injustice as concerns the issue of pornography is being directed toward men when in fact it should be just as much if not more directed toward women themselves. Jill Arthur says "all women have minds of their own and control their own actions." Do the women in *Playboy* not "have minds of their own and control their own actions"? Do they desire to do this?

I hope you're not suggesting that these women are suppressed and forced by men to do what they do. Let me remind you that I limit my argument to the stationary being sold in the Oasis Variety Store since this was the original cause of this disturbance. I find it quite slanderous of these women to bring in the whole issue of pornography and accuse me of being pro-porn when I am nothing of the sort.

If there are images in these magazines that offend you, don't look. I'm sure that the male society of York isn't tickled with the idea of *Playgirl* being sold in the same store. Today's value systems are pretty shabby, but don't jeopardize your sanity in pursuing "women's rights" in order to bring us all back to morality. We're all fighting this one, but when attacks are made on myself and men alike on our collusive gender being the cause of pornography, you can't expect us to send flowers.

Lastly, I would suggest you leave censorship to the Censor Board. I assure you, there are women on staff. I would fall short of the purpose in saying that shame and contrition belongs to both male and female. And it is not for one to think they are the all-righteous and the other the blasphemous culprit.

—D. Hooper