

editorial

Wednesday June 24th, 1992 • Volume 1, Issue 1



Embarrassment by Degree

The convocation caravan came to campus last week and proved York events tend to be more spectacle than substance.

Sporting their \$20 rental robes and sagging velvet-esque hats, students paraded into the bigtop tent to take that next step into the rest of their lives.

What many graduates could not realize is that like most events on campus, their convocation had just as much to do with York's corporate image as it did with student achievement.

A university reveals a lot about its character by the people it chooses to award with honorary degrees. — and this year's recipients of York degrees included "Honest" Ed Mirvish and Sonja Bata.

So just what did Mirvish and Bata do to earn recognition from York?

During Mirvish's acceptance speech almost two weeks ago, he invited graduates and their parents to celebrate his birthday by visiting his store and cashing in on some sale items.

This says a lot about what Mirvish has been able to accomplish in his life: he's encouraged thousands of people to shop at his stores, and he's earned bags of money in the process.

York officials awarded him the degree because he gave away some of that money — and some of it wound up in York coffers.

In fact, York almost gave him a college once. His name was included in a shortlist of names for what

ended up being called Norman Bethune College.

Imagine: Ed Mirvish College. Instead of "Science and Society" the college's motto would be "Come in and get lost." Who knows? Maybe they'll end up naming York Lanes shopping mall after him.

More disturbing is the degree granted to Bata.

Bata used to sit on York's Board of Governors and is the member of the board of shoe giant Bata Ltd.

The university's official line on Bata is her "commitment to boards of service organizations" which deal with such concerns including "the environment."

But Bata Ltd. has come under attack from human rights groups, environmentalists, and anti-apartheid organizations. During the 1980s, only after long-standing public pressure did the company divest its significant interest from South Africa. Some activists are still after Bata Ltd. for the company's use of ultra-low-wage labour in developing countries — including Indonesia, which has been condemned recently for its violent acquisitions of colonies like East Timor.

Bata Ltd. was also fined \$144,000 for dumping toxic industrial waste into Ontario rivers this year.

Obviously Bata's honorary degree has less to do with her tree-hugging proclivities as her fat chequebook and her high-level connections.

Of course there were some degrees given out to deserving recipients. But perhaps Bata and Mirvish were more appropriate, given the university's bottom-line oriented approach to developing York in the '90s.

Statue support

Dear Mr. Castle and Mr. McNeely,

We are Chinese students from Beijing. We recently learned from the *Toronto Star* that York students have erected a statue of the Goddess of Democracy at York University's Student Centre, despite interference from the Chinese Government. We are deeply moved by York students' sympathy and support for student democratic movements around the world, including China.

The Goddess of Democracy at York campus makes us recall what happened



in Beijing Tiananmen Square three years ago. Three years ago, the original statue of Goddess of Democracy was erected in Tiananmen Square by Beijing students, some of them no longer alive today. The massacre by the Chinese Communist region crushed both the statue of Goddess of Democracy and the students' hope. Our younger sister, who was a fourth year university student in 1989, was a participant in the student demonstrations in Tiananmen Square. Because our parents forced her to leave the square on June 2, she became one of the survivors of the bloody massacre on June 3 and 4. Our sister is now still in China, like millions of young Chinese students there, having no freedom of speech, which we enjoy here in Canada.

To show our appreciation to York students and our support for the students democratic movement, we would like to donate \$64 to the York Student association. This \$64 is a very small amount of money by Canadian standards, but we hope that it will be seen as a sign of our gratitude. We interpret sixty-four as June 4, in the memory of the democratic movement in 1989, and of the students who lost their lives in Tiananmen Square in their struggle for freedom and democracy. We have made a promise to ourselves that every year on June 4, we will donate \$64 to an organization which supports the democratic movement in China, until the day when democracy and freedom become a reality in our home country. We hope for the sake of our family and friends who remain in China that this day will soon come.

Yours truly,
Jean and William
(Last names withheld by request)

Wheeltrans woes

Dear Editor,

It would be marvelous if the different portions of York University and Wheeltrans could agree to have signs erected for the bus pick-up and drop-off spot.

I know that unless I know the spot that the bus is going to, it can be very hard to guess where different drivers will be. It must be really hard on the drivers as well as the passengers.

We will publish letters up to 250 words. They must be typed, double spaced, and accompanied by the writer's name and phone number. Material deemed libelous or discriminatory by the staff of *Excalibur* will be rejected. The opinions expressed are those of the letter-writers and do not represent those of the *Excalibur* staff, Editorial Board, or Board of Publications.

Somebody expressed the thought that the drivers know where to go, but they don't because the shift changes, and the next driver doesn't know where the original drop-off point was. I don't think that anybody would want to get a bus by thumbing one down whenever. We all need bus stops.

Signs do not cost very much and some are really needed. Personally I would like to see one at Calumet College as I have a night class there and also because one of the people I know teaches there and has to arrange an appropriate spot.

Please let this message be heard.

Sue Lawrence

Anti-space bias

Dear Editor,

As a student at York University I have always been impressed with the anti-racism stand you hold. You have shown us that stereo-types based on racial, ethnic, or religious backgrounds can be determined to a society that wants to achieve equality and freedom for all.

As a science student at York however, I am disappointed at what seems to me to be your prejudice attitude towards science. You say things such as, "The ISU is a spin-off of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, America's top academic defense contractor, ..." Without saying so, you have implied that the ISU is involved with doing American military research, a good trick for an organization that trains students from many countries, including those that were once on the other side of the iron curtain. You also didn't mention people like Arthur C. Clark and Carl Sagan, vocally anti-military people, supporters of the ISU. In fighting racism you have told us not to condemn by association, but you seem to do it here.

You also seem to be promoting stereo-types. In your last issue, you ask as a headline "Just Who Are These Space Cadets?" The term is a common one, and is not used as a compliment. By using such a label, you are promoting what you are fighting to remove. You have shown us that giving a cultural or religious group a label is wrong, people are just people, all different, all with unique goals and dreams. So why have you used a derogatory title to refer to people interested in space? Such a term is demeaning and only promotes apathy, not understanding.

You have done so well in the fight against racism. Yet examples like the two above are not uncommon in your paper. Please don't destroy your reputation by promoting yet another prejudice.

Sincerely,
Peter White,
Third year Graduate Student,
Physics and Astronomy Department

excalibur

York University's Community Newspaper

420 Student Centre, York University
4700 Keele Street
North York, Ontario
M3J 1P3

Telephone:
Advertising: 736-5238
Editorial: 736-5239
Fax: 736-5841

Excalibur is a volunteer organization. We will consider for publication all submissions that are not deemed libelous or discriminatory by the editors and staff. The opinions expressed are not necessarily shared by all members of the staff or board of publications. Final responsibility resides with the editor-in-chief as outlined in the constitution.

Editor-in-chief Pat Micalli
Managing Editor John Montesano
Production Manager Stephie Perry
Prod Assistant Catharine Soukoreff
Arts Editors Eric Alper, Lilac Cana, Lee Romberg, and Harry Rudolfs
Features Editor Doug Saunders
Letters Editor Catharine Soukoreff
Sports Editor Nick Davis
News Editor Jennifer Lim
Photo Editor vacant
Women's Issues Coordinator Sara Singer
Gay Issues Coordinator Brian Rigg
Lesbian Issues Coordinator Frances Limfat
Race Issues Coordinators Dwayne Morgan

Staff: Rose-ann Bailey, Steve Balsky, Elaine Bellic, Prasad Bidaye, David Black, Michele Boesner, Maggie Borch, Jacen Brathwaite, Andrew Brouse, Trevor Burnett, David Camfield, Clive Cohen, Aaron Dantowitz, Patrick Davila, Christine de Léon, David Gardner, Rob Gibson, Adrian Graham, Corey Goldman, Gina Hanlon, Elissa Horscroft, Jim Hounslow, Michael Hussey, Sheena Jarvis, Brett Lamb, Moira MacDonald, Azad Majeed, Daniel Naccarato, Michael Nachoff, Ira Nayman, James Oscar, Judy Passley, Collin Phillips, Robert Pincomb, Samuel Putinja, Mike Raycroft, Cindy Reeves, Riccardo Sala, Josh Rubin, Tom Schneider, Jim Sheppard, David Sutherland
The staff would like to thank the following for helping us get our paper back: The Charlatan, CKLN's The Classroom Struggle, CHRY, Canadian University Press, The Strand, The McGill Daily, The Varsity

Contributors: Laurie S. Alphonse, Brenda Bouw, Dean J. Brown, Phil Downes, Pam Jacobs, Tom Kim, Tina Novotny, Emre Onat

Acting Board Chair, Grant Wagman

excalendar

Wednesday June 24
Staff meeting at 6:00pm

Sunday July 12
Student press skills conference, Uof T
Hart House. Noon. Call 736-5239.

Wednesday July 29
Next Excal issue

Quote of the issue:
"News is what somebody
somewhere wants to suppress,
all the rest is advertising."
Lord Northcliffe