

A forum for comment and reaction. Excalibur will accept columns, comments, and cartoons, from any member of York.

Dear Sir:

In reading Excalibur and assorted college newspapers this year I have been appalled to see the number of articles devoted to the United States and its problems. For some strange reason the moral outrage and emotional involvement students manifest is directly proportional to the distance they are from the place where injustice or inequity occurs. Is there a riot at Columbia? Then by all means write an article about activists at Columbia. Are the blacks threatening to burn Detroit or to shoot the pigs in Oakland? Then by all means warn the honkeys at York about the flames about to consume them (Will the flames from Detroit or the bullets in Oakland come by CNR or CPR?)

But, and this may be news to some students, York is not Columbia nor Toronto Detroit nor

the angels, where they now hover, and seek the Canadian equivalent of George Wallace or Dick Nixon.

It is easy to get excited about Vietnam, or race, it is a much more difficult task to get excited about Canada, or Toronto, or York. For one thing, the issues are blurred here, (there are few blacks, and the poor Canadian whites are so demoralized they don't even fight back as American blacks are now doing), and information is a little more difficult to obtain — especially, for example, when it is a question of looking critically at the university where most students will be spending the next three or four years of their lives.

One of the things that struck me this summer when I was teaching summer school at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York, was the amount of docu-

cerned students are now beginning to do something about the fact York has done nothing to help disadvantaged high school students in downtown Toronto, and that others are beginning to ask whether York might be used for some other purpose during the summer than to simply provide facilities for the procession of conventions that fill York's dorms and coffers during the summer break.

But aside from the rare exceptions, when has the administration or the faculty or the students shown some imagination, some critical insight in reference to this university? Certainly not the Board of Governors, whose most imaginative act recently was to provide the money for a football team and chapel. Certainly not the students who may occasionally sniff the clear Canadian air waiting for the smoke that might

where the administration from the Board of Governors on down is intelligent, reasonable and mainly benevolent. York, after all, isn't Columbia.

On the other hand, those few radicals active at York have, through laziness or hypnosis brought on by overly frequent viewing of CBS and NBC become exercised about issues that concern the Americans, not Canadians.

In addition, the university is finding it increasingly difficult to fulfill that function for which it is uniquely qualified — to train critical minds, and to exercise a critical intelligence on itself and the society around it. No other institution is so well suited to this task — and if the university ceases to perform it — nothing will take its place. Unfortunately, the university is becoming a degree mill, or a country club, or

do or don't have access to information or the right to participate in decision making. Generally students and faculty at York are in a good position as compared with other North American schools. But the question is, can we do better?

This is where the newspapers enter in. My feeling has been that the York student papers could do a much better job not only of informing the university community about what is happening on this campus, but of informing them about what ought to happen, and asking why things are happening. That is, they should raise as many questions as they answer. Certainly I, like other faculty members, have a responsibility to the university community, for many of us have questions or opinions and many of us feel the students could be better informed about the issues

## Critical intelligence - nothing to replace

Canada the US. I do not mean to disparage the intelligence or morality of those York students who are quite rightly upset about injustice in New York or Detroit or Oakland but I do question their real desire to come to grips with injustice or to correct obvious inequities.

It is easy indeed to rehash the latest CBS documentary or to warn whites here about the coming purification through fire and sword. It is easy because the information is available and the emotions easily aroused. The information can be obtained from television or the newspapers while the emotions are easily tapped since the issues in the US obviously concern good guys and bad guys and students here are not faced with the rather complex problem of deciding whether an apartment building in their city should be burned to the ground or whether a local cop with four kids should be shot because he is white. My guess is that if the race problem — or Vietnam for that matter — ever came to Canada many students at York would leave the side of

mentation the radical students at Cornell had managed to accumulate on Vietnam, the race problem in the US, as well as Ithaca and Cornell itself. They had WORKED at seeking out injustice, and they had something to show for their work. What have radical students at York to show for their outrage? Have they been energized by their sense of injustice to examine how their university works? How many of them, or any of the students at York, for that matter, know who makes the major decisions at York? What the Board of Governors is or how it works? Or who is on it?

How many students at York have bothered to examine the priorities of this university? How many have bothered, for example, to ask whether the money recently spent to fund the York football team might have been better spent on additional scholarship funds or on additional faculty to teach tutorials? How many students here know or care about the money that is to be spent to build a chapel at York? I understand that some con-

drift across the border from a burning Detroit. Certainly not the majority of the faculty who agonized last year, and then finally decided to delay the momentous step of allowing six, or was it sixteen? or sixty? students to attend Faculty Council meetings where, all faculty admitted, few important decisions are made.

Of course, one of the major reasons for the rather sporadic activity of campus radicals at York, and the consequent lack of ferment, is that radicals and activists are rare on this campus. Most York students I would guess are first generation BA's, that is, they come from families where they will be first to have received a university education. Like first generation Italians, or Irish, or News in the US melting pot, these first generation Canadian university students do not want to rock the boat that is carrying them from the land of blue collar, or low paying white collar jobs to the much more felicitous climb of big business and respectable employment. Moreover, most students find it hard to become excited about York

a coffee shop, or a job, or a research facility, or a big daddy — it all depends on who you are and what you want from it. I have no quarrel with those who view the university in this way, but I would like to think that those who have come here to drink coffee, or have fun, will at the same time develop some rudimentary ability to look at themselves and their environment in an intelligent and critical fashion. And I also hope that those who draw their salaries from the university might also demonstrate to the students that being a teacher or an administrator does not necessarily exclude the expression of moral judgements or of critical opinion concerning the university and the world.

Of course, in order to express informed judgements it is necessary to have information, and to act on these judgements it is necessary to have some means to participate in shaping the priorities of the university. Otherwise we will all be whistling in the wind. It would be pointless to go into detail concerning the areas where students and faculty now

we think are important. One way to communicate this concern is to take time out from teaching or writing, and to write occasionally for the student newspapers. At other universities I have known, it was not considered degrading to write an article or two for the student paper, and the paper itself never suffered from occasional faculty participation.

As for the radicals and activists, those who write for the school newspapers and those who do not, I would suggest that they might be surprised to discover that injustice and inequity can be found within the range of their own eyes and ears. York may not be Columbia, but it is also neither more nor less tainted by the evils of selfishness, shortsightedness and egotism than most other universities in North America. To assume that the greatest evils occur elsewhere is to implicitly grant York — and Canada — virtues they neither possess nor deserve.

Harvey G. Simmons  
Department of Political Science

## Letterslotslettersletshavelotsf

Dear Sir:

How really mature are students who have allowed the freedom of York University to go to their heads? Why is the privilege of disputing with the administration so blatantly misused over seemingly unimportant issues?

Is it simply to show that, since the release from the thumb-pressure of high-school principals students actually have minds of their own?

I wish to relate an example of the childish misuse of power that has invariably affected several hundred innocent students in Social Science 176.

Last week we were informed that a series of required movies were to be shown at Burton Auditorium during the month of October. A fee of twenty-five cents was to be levied on each person attending to help pay the cost of renting these popular full-length movies.

The other day, a professor announced that a group of students had approached the administration in a demonstration of student power, and had demanded that since the films were re-

quired viewing the administration had no right to ask an admission fee. They gave in with good grace and our quarters are now free from danger.

The point is though that Soc. Sci. 176 happens to be one of the more expensive courses here at York. Because the money now must go to procuring the movies, we are unable to afford inviting special guest speakers down for our benefit. In effect, a small group of students have hindered our education without the consent of the majority.

Is this fair? When was a vote taken for this independent action to be legally carried out? Don't we have to buy our books? Or should that be free too, solely because they are required by the course we take?

To use an old cliché, if you don't stand up and be counted now you will be subjecting yourself to the new thumb-pressures of headstrong and irresponsible students who should know better — who should save their strength for issues that really count.

Margrethe Christiansen  
Winters I

## COMMENT

by George B. Orr

You've read this far, have you? Congratulations. You're the one person who doesn't give a damn whether this university lives or dies in its institutional tracks.

You walk around between classes, picking the fleas out of your bottom, whining that York should be renamed something more suitable, like Backwater College. Sure, if there's a dance, you might go, if you can be bothered. Otherwise, you'd just as soon go downtown and screw around.

As far as you're concerned, athletics are a pain in the bottom as well. It just isn't worth the sweat to trek out to the gym or the fields to watch.

What are you afraid of? Believe me, if your pants fall down, nobody will notice. Last week's editorial was right. The college system with that Simon Legree cripple called Y.S.C. is worse than a farce. Worse in that the potential that this university possesses is slowly flushing itself down the drain.

And the less you care; the less spirit you've got, then the more atrophied the rest of this place becomes. Vicious circles, without exception, screw themselves into the ground.

One can't blame the Administration, can one? They've laid out plans for the best possible university in North America with regard to physical design, faculty attraction, athletic use, and the like. They're doing their bit to the tune of over \$200 million.

But the slack student body, hampered by its juvenile hatters of over-government, is within an ace of extinguishing itself now and forever as a potent force in the growth of York.

But the students can pull themselves out of this rut. With a few judiciously placed events and social coups, York could be the prime mover among Canadian universities by this Christmas.

There are at present certain concerned students here who

are trying to do just that for you. They want you to go home at Christmas and be able to utter that most corny of all phrases, "I am at York student, and proud of it!"

This group, and it's a small one, has been tramping on every administrative toe to get their way. They will make York exactly what it should be; the one university in Canada that all others will turn to for inspiration.

In three months, we can steal the spotlight from all other schools and we will do just that. Get that message and get it now. And if it sounds the least bit corny or gauche, then pack up and go home to Peterborough or St. Catharines, or wherever you belong.

Next fall when the new frosh register, they'll be entering the best total true university in Canada, and possibly the best in the world. This is because you are going to roll up your sleeves and work, to make York's name synonymous with 'going places'.

If you don't think you can hack that, get out now. By then it will be too late.