

Features

After 20 years, York students ask:

How good a university?

Diane Wilson

"York University is the 'hotbed' of radicalism."

These were the words that third-year philosophy student Ezio DaDalt heard from his high school teacher. They helped him to make his decision to attend York the next year. Laughing now at the idea of a "radical" York he still feels that York is as good a place to study as anywhere.

"You see, I look at York University as a functional tool—I'm here to get a degree and when I get the degree it will have performed its function," said DaDalt. "University, for me, is a means to an end."

Regarding extra-curricular activities, he feels that York does not evoke any feelings of allegiance and so does not participate in anything. DaDalt does not think that college organizers try hard enough to make new York students feel at home.

David Chodikoff, student spokesman for C.Y.S.F. argues the idea of York as mini-community. He feels that colleges do encourage new students to join activities, if they want to.

Yet, first year student Sean Flood, hasn't felt that York is a 'community' at all—he didn't even know there were activities to join. "York is far too large for one thing. There doesn't seem to

be any intramural sports to join—looks like the only thing to join are political clubs. But the bars are O.K."

Each student did say, however, that they liked the informal atmosphere at York. An ex-York student who asked not to be identified attended in 1966-70 and went on to teach at York. He said he found the school's atmosphere to be characteristic of York even then.

"York was more open and informal than U of T at the time, something few of us realized until word filtered up about things like dons' powers and residence rules at U of T. Moreover, the student sub-culture was itself free of the weight of accumulated traditions and division—no fraternities or sororities, for example. If we were going to be silly, at least it was a silliness of our own invention."

David Chodikoff too feels that this is a unique trait of York and he thinks that the administration should take the credit. "We have some very good people committed to this university who are both approachable and reasonable. It is mostly because of them that York University is a great school."

However, the ex-York student thinks that the administration is responsible for the large and complex bureaucratic system

that students have to deal with. He feels that the system is immensely complex, with the politics of the Conservative Government at the top.

"Inside the university, there are rifts all over as the relatively shrinking resource base pits academic units and staff categories against one another. The more division, the better the administration can enforce and is hence not moved to oppose the dictates of the province."

Steve Rimmer, fourth year student, strongly agrees with the view that the administration has set up conscious divisions. As a student who attended Trent University for a year, he finds his years at York very frustrating at times.

"At Trent you dealt with human beings if you had a problem, whereas here at York you deal with computers." Most students don't know who to oppose so they get sent from one department to another. Finally, the student is so frustrated that he screams at an innocent secretary. Then he gives up. Rimmer feels that it's a cause and effect circle.

"The administration is unapproachable and the students are apathetic. But when you are continually battering your head against a stone wall, it's easy to understand why students at York are so apathetic."

A good example of this cause

and effect is fourth year English student, Kathryn Smith. She wants to be a writer and, in her second year, decided on the advice of her advisor to enter into the creative writing department. After lining up for about an hour, the students in line were told that all the courses were already filled. The next year, she tried to get into just one course and that too was already filled. What are her feelings about the whole mess?

"I guess I gave up. I got so frustrated—I didn't see that it would help if I threw a temper

tantrum. You just cannot fight this system."

Perhaps, as Chodikoff says, criticizing this system without offering any alternatives is not helping York at all. But is it not positive to make most indifferent undergrads aware of the problems that exist instead of accepting this system unequivocally? Only after examining the problems that we have at York can we possibly offer solutions. And this involves criticism which, to my mind anyway, is more beneficial than apathy.

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