

## University education 20 years hence: substance and symbolism

# Forum for discussion about future of education

### SHEREE-LEE OLSON

"York will survive and flourish," said York President H. Ian Macdonald in a speech opening his current conference, *University Education 20 Years Hence: Substance and Symbolism*, "but the university has never been so threatened as it is now." Twenty-three years old and the third largest in Canada, York has reached its physical capacity and must enter an era of renewal, responsive to "changes taking place at a rate almost too rapid to comprehend. Surely a university must understand those changes, survive them and contribute to them," Macdonald said.

### Information revolution

A primary concern is the so-called information revolution. "It would be ironic," he said, "for universities to lag behind in the dissemination of information that leads to knowledge."

Although York has been criticized for its high accessibility, said Macdonald, it has never lowered its standards. In order to remain viable, it must continue this "process of democratization" and make itself accessible to more students in more ways. But at the same time, York needs to ask questions about the "substance and the ideology of a university education, and the balance between the two."

"I don't expect this conference will produce instant revisions," said Macdonald, "but set the stage to under-

stand" changes going on outside and in. He considers the conference of basic importance to the future well-being of this institution, he said.

The conference "on the verge of 1984" is timely, but Chairman Maurice Elliott said on Monday that the Senate's stipulation when it endorsed the conference a year ago, that is, "focus on York" presented a problem. That is, how to elicit participation when a small internal conference on education held in 1981 "clearly indicated," he said, "that it was hard to get people at York enthused." Many York faculty, suggested Elliott, feel little need to examine what they are doing.

The solution was to bring in five guest speakers, all of whom can claim some insight into the issues, and at the same time to run a series of group discussions composed of members of the York faculty along with representatives from local school boards. The entire conference is being recorded for the archives.

Outside speakers, said Elliott, would stimulate the York community "to focus on our own aspirations and re-examine some of the intentions with which York started its original pilgrimage." He had approached the presidents of both Harvard and Yale, but without success. Then he read *The Paideia Proposal* by Dr. Mortimer Adler, Director of the Institute for Philosophical Research in Chicago, and was "amazed at some of

the coincidences in their thinking, decided he'd make a "splendid" opening speaker. Both Master Elliott and President Macdonald said that York is futher along than most universities and the "democratization of education" that Adler espouses.

### Encourage discussion

The other speakers will be more specialized: Professor Rush, a sociologist from Simon Fraser; Dr. Henschley from the Faculty of Education at McGill; Dr. Livingstone from Toronto's O.I.S.E.; and Dr. Myer Horowitz, president of University

of Alberta.

Members of the discussion groups, which comprise a kind of "subtextual" conference, are free, said Elliott, to reply to or bring into focus the speakers but "that is the easy way out." Just as the session titles are only "clothes pegs on which to hang ideas," the discussions are meant to encourage "figurative snowball fights, unbraced creativity."

"I think they should use the sessions as a process rather than a place to make statements," Elliott said. Audience participation, especially by other educators, would be fruitful, but at a meeting on Monday the

panelists seemed to agree that it could still be a good conference with an audience of six.

Unfortunately, this "subtextual" conference lacks any formal student contribution.

### No student involvement

CYSF President Maurizio Bevilacqua, invited to participate by the committee a month ago, approached the *Excalibur* editors to join him. "We were pretty enthused," said Bevilacqua on Tuesday, but the committee failed to return his subsequent calls. However, he didn't "see any problem",

since he planned to attend the discussions. "I don't see it's necessary for me or any (other) student to be on the panels." The question of student participation had passed out of Bevilacqua's hands and simply died. CYSF Academic Advisor Mark Pearlman requested student participation in a small announcement in the March 3 *Excalibur*, but according to conference organizer Vicki Hodgkinson, there was no response. It was unfortunate, she said, because the committee was "supportive". However, "we felt we couldn't impose. I guess it (the conference) wasn't a priority with CYSF."

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## York economics grads return to give job tips

### ADAM BRYANT

Economics is primarily a training for understanding the environment you live in, and interpersonal skills are very important in the business world, according to five former York economics students.

Approximately 150 students crowded into the Ross Faculty Lounge last Tuesday afternoon to attend an Economics Student Association-organized career seminar. The five York grads, all well-established in economics-related careers, were invited to speak about their careers and to field questions from students.

### Role of degree

Each member of the panel recounted their career history and described what they felt were important considerations for economics students.

Norma Michael, Vice-President in Business Development and Planning for the Canadian Development Corporation, spoke of the role of an economics degree. "Economics is similar to a training in Latin in that it gives you a great understanding of your environment." She added, "Careers that build on economics are more interesting than the pure economics professions which are more limited."

The usefulness of courses in computers and numerical analysis was stressed by John Clinkard from the Economics Division of the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce. When considering a career, Clinkard told the audience to remember that economists play a larger role in big national companies than they do in the smaller businesses.

### Learn to speak French

John Ilkiw, the only civil servant on the panel, is employed by the Pension Policy Unit of the Ontario Ministry of Treasury and Economics. He said that jobs for professional economists exist primarily in the academia and government sectors. He strongly urged students interested in government economics to acquire a knowledge of the French language.

Tris Lett, part owner of J.B. Sparling Consultants, said that his experience taught him the importance of being "able to sell your ideas if you want to rise in a company."

John Tysall, Treasurer of Gulf Canada, stressed the value of interpersonal skills. "It's important to have the ability to manage people and

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## Student Federation charges Ontario PC's with interference in referendum

### BRIAN HENRY

The Canadian Federation of Students-Ontario has charged that the Ontario Progressive Party is interfering in a student-run election and referendum at the University of Toronto.

CFS-O Chairperson Helena Mitchell made the charge in response to a letter which appeared on P.C. stationery, and which criticized CFS-O as a "corrupt and ineffective" organization that "care(s) more about destroying the Ontario Government than about true student concerns."

U of T students will decide by referendum on March 16 and 17 whether or not to become members of CFS-O and its parent body, the Canadian Federation of Students. The referendum is taking place at the same time as elections for the U of T student government, SAC.

The letter, addressed to "Fellow Campus Conservatives", is signed by Tony Clement, a U of T student governor and leading proponent of the "No" side in

the referendum. The letter was included in a recent mailing of the University of Toronto Progressive Conservatives.

Asked for specific instances of corruption in the CFS, Clement said he did not know of any. He said that by "corrupt", he meant that the CFS is not accountable to U of T students. Clement also said that at CFS-O demonstrations, he's heard the slogan, "Tories out."

Referring to his terminology, Clement said his letter was not intended to be splashed on the pages of the *Varsity* (the U of T student paper). It was meant to make people who would naturally be interested worked up enough to vote 'No' and to support the "No" campaign.

Clement added that opinions can be put in euphemisms or in inflammatory language, and in this case they were put in language meant to arouse people.

Peter Hoy, CFS-O field worker for the Metro area, commented that "there is a difference between inflama-

tory language meant to arouse people and outright lies meant to deceive people."

CFS-O has requested a statement from the Ontario Progressive Conservative Party dissociating the party from the letter, but the student federation has yet to receive one. Bob Harris, Executive Director of the Ontario PC's, informed *Excalibur* that OPCS considered Clement's use of the party's stationery an impropriety.

Tony Clement said the letter was private and contained only his personal opinions. He said it was customary for the U of T PC's to use Ontario PC letterhead. He also said that the U of T PC's had not passed any resolution supporting his opinions.

The letter states that "left-wing and radical elements...have banded together to run the 'Yes' side of the referendum, as well as (to) elect their own in the upcoming SAC election. The letter names several candidates ad NDP or ultra-left,

and endorses several candidates who are "associated with our club".

Clement said in his letter he was not describing either SAC president Tim Van Wart, or SAC external affairs director, Kent Darling, both of whom support the "Yes" side, as leftist. He said he was concerned by the "well organized insurgency of the CFS-O" and the Students Action Committee.

STAC is an organized group of 15 students with a common platform who are running for SAC positions. Clement said he considered STAC left-wing and radical.

STAC has endorsed the CFS and, according to the *Varsity*, its platform includes support of women's issues, a campus centre, opposition to university and government policies that discriminate against international students, the imposition of a SAC housing committee, and a revision of U of T's tenure policy whereby professors would be judged by teaching ability as well as publications.

Debbie Kirkwood