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'Irresponsible journalism' blamed for misconception

ADAM BRYANT

The suicide rate in Canada is hardly the epidemic so widely reported by the media last year, says Gordon Winch, Executive Director of Metro's Distress Centre. "Irresponsible journalism" is the reason for the public's misconception about suicide Winch claims.

According to Winch, the distorted picture of suicide in Canada stems from the media's tendency to focus on teenage suicides. The media does this because of the "dramatic news value of youth suicides. These stories have a grabber effect, as people have a more immediate response to any tragic news about children," Winch says.

Winch recounts an experience to demonstrate what he sees as a distortion of reality. "I was giving a talk at a high school, and I asked the students to estimate the teenage suicide rate. It was incredible how high their guesses were. There is a great tension around suicides in high schools."

The facts, however, show that teenagers account for a very small proportion of suicides. People 20-29 and 50-59 years old commit suicide most frequently.

Winch would like to see the media's coverage concerned more with suicide as a phenomenon than as an alarming news flash. "I would be delighted to see a reporter do

interviews with people between 20-29 and talk with them about suicide and suicidal feelings. We have to begin to unearth some of the causes behind it," Winch said.

Suicides in Canada are less frequent in the east than in the west, which Winch attributes to the greater family stability in the east, and the higher numbers of single persons in the west. Also, unemployment in the east affects the whole town, which is not the case in the west. Bearing the hardship as a group is easier than doing it alone, speculated Winch.

Three times more men than women commit suicide in Canada. On a world scale, Canada's suicide

rate, approximately 14 per 100,000, is on the lower end. Mexico and Ireland are the lowest, whereas Hungary is the highest with 50 per 100,000. "There is an image among the elderly people there, that to commit suicide is courageous. This results in a family pattern," explains Winch.

The Distress Centre Winch directs, now in its 16th year, is one of 16 centres in and around Toronto. The centres receive funding from the United Way, the private sector and churches. Its services include a 24-hour telephone service, public education, and "survivor programmes" for relatives of suicide victims.

Letter: BOG candidate asks for your vote

Vote for experience and commitment. Vote Claudio C. Lewis for Board of Governors' Representative. I would bring to the position a great deal of experience acquired by being involved in the Atkinson College Students' Association. I will be the association's Vice-President for the 1983-84 session. In the past I have held the positions of Director of Internal Affairs, Student Senator, Chairman of the Publication's Board and student member of the Atkinson Faculty Council.

I am running because in my opinion the time has come for strong and responsible representation on the Board. I can provide that type of leadership. It is time for someone with a new perspective, a proven record of dedication to students and one who would gain the confidence of the Board, by being able to articulate the concerns of the students with vigour, conviction and knowledge.

The Future

With the university under financial pressure, students need a strong and sensitive voice to protect their interest. And make no doubt about, the impact of that pressure will be felt sooner than expected.

In a draft budget report to Senate, Vice-President Farr warned that if revenues fall short of expectations there will be changes to budgetary allocations to programs midway through the 1983-84 session. What

this means is that some where during 1983-84 fiscal cost will be made to absorb and revenue shortage. Cuts which may very well mean reduction in important programs. I will fight to ensure that students get the best deal for their dollars.

Accessibility v.s. Quality

There are those involved in this campaign who see accessibility to post-secondary education as a number one priority. While this is a great thought, it is important to stress that quality in this institution should be number one. In a job market where thousands of people literally compete for the few jobs available, the best might be determined by the individual whose university degree will be assessed by the institution from which he or she graduates. Thus quality education will determine whether an individual receives unemployment insurance in the future or is on the road to a successful career. In this light it is important to emphasize that the student rep. on the Board of Governors' fight to have resources allocated in such a way so as to ensure the quality of education at York would be second to none.

Foreign Students' Dilemma
The foreign student today are victims of a system that seems to ignore their plight. To the university administrations in the province, the foreign students seem an easy way to a large revenue pool. The fact of the matter is that in the universities'

quest for the fast buck, they are making university education an elitist activity that only the extremely wealthy in the Third World would enjoy. I am of the opinion that the initiative for any kind of redress to this problem must come from the Board of Governors' at York and similar bodies around the province.

There is no doubt that these students should pay for their

education but when such a policy threatens access to higher education for certain people's around the world, then that policy becomes counter productive. I would also like to see a portion of these students fees allocated to a bursary fund to help some of these students who from time to time experience crises while studying on this campus. Vote concern. Vote Claudio Lewis.

CFS lobbying 'responsible'

I am writing to express my support for CFS and CFS-O/OFS, and my deep hope that the students at York vote to become full members of the federal and provincial organizations.

As a member of the Graduate Students' Union (which holds full membership in CFS and CFS-O/OFS), and as the president of the Ontario Graduate Association (which is a commission of CFS-O/OFS), I have seen how effective students can be when they work together. Lobbying by CFS and CFS-O/OFS has been responsible for increased federal bursary money for full and part-time students, was one of the reasons that graduate visa students face only a 5 per cent increase in their tuition for 1983-84, and kept residence cafeterias from bearing the burden of a 7 per cent sales tax on the food they sold to students in residence. Without organized and coherent lobbying

efforts from students, none of these achievements would have been forthcoming.

Because colleges and universities face even more stringent cutbacks in the near future, it is imperative that students work together to show the federal and provincial governments that their present priorities are destroying a post-secondary system which should be among the finest in the world. A united student movement is the best way for this goal to be realized.

York students, join with us! Help CFS and CFS-O/OFS to make our colleges and universities the outstanding centres of education that they ought to be! We need a unified student movement, and we would like York to be a part of that movement.

Robin Sundstrom
(president)

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