

INTRAMURAL FEES

In recent weeks there has been considerable public speculation about intramural fees for 1987-1988. The Department of Physical Education, Recreation and Athletics has now informed the Provost of the University that any increase in intramural fees for the coming year will reflect essentially inflationary factors and thus be kept to a range of about 5%.

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Though some aspects of the current discussion have been based on incorrect information on the part of the participants, the larger issues that have arisen are important and timely. The administration of the University would welcome a focussed review of the priorities that should govern policy in the area of recreation and athletics, and particularly the York community's sense of the desired priorities. There are many choices to be made: inter-university versus intramural programs; a competitive approach versus broad participation in intramural activities; casual as opposed to organized recreation. At York, these and related questions are made even more difficult by our terrible dearth of facilities.

Generally on the question of fees, it bears noting that the effects of government underfunding are real. "User-pay" practices are not limited to Recreation, to York, or indeed to universities in general. As is well known by anyone who has been involved in sport in their own community, even for children in softball, soccer, lacrosse, hockey and other activities, all participants are expected to pay a fee in spite of the taxes their parents have paid to the municipal and provincial government.

What should the level of the fee be? How much differentiation should there be among different sports? To what extent must we pass along externally determined costs (for bowling, curling, etc.)? These are valid questions, and in the last year the Provost has been encouraging their discussion by user-related groups such as the Inter-College Athletics Council and the Council of Masters. Such discussion will continue with a view to arriving at conclusions which are both fair and financially realistic.

OFFICE OF THE PROVOST

Sontag exposes myths of the modern



THOMAS VICTOR

By PAULETTE PEIROL

The modern world's acute historical self-consciousness is "the most radical liberation we've experienced . . . and also the most suicidal," according to renowned American critic Susan Sontag. "The dilemmas of the modern still are unresolved and extremely dangerous," she told over 1,200 people in her lecture "Traditions of the New" at the Ryerson Theatre last Sunday.

The paradoxical title of Sontag's essay-in-progress (likely her last expository work before she devotes herself to fiction writing) is reflective of her world view. "Every society," she said, "is characterized by inherent contradictions."

According to Sontag, freedom of choice has been translated into freedom to consume; individuality has given way to egotism; and discourse about Western political options has become virtually silenced. "Clearly, there is a mutation and people are uncomfortable . . . (yet) in terms of predictions, it depends on the meta-

phors we use to describe our consciousness," she said.

Society's prevalent metaphor, Sontag argued, is a temporal one rooted in the notions of "modern" or "new." These terms serve not only descriptive, but also prescriptive functions, and are largely responsible for Western man's insatiable hunger for novelty and his underlying fear of stasis.

Sontag defined the modern as "the triumph of secular notions of progress." She noted that historical time gradually became identified with "units" of this progress. Modern society has packaged these units into three distinct categories: ages (such as the Victorian Era); generations (as in the Beat Generation); and most recently, decades.

Sontag called "decade-talk" a product of the 1960s, and added that "people have been saying 'the '60s are over' ever since." The 1960s were seen as a time of progress and improvement over the previous decade. Yet the '70s suddenly

became a "cooling out time," Sontag said, and the current decade viewed as "even more disappointing."

"All these distinctions are arbitrary, and the people who use them know that," Sontag said. "They are ideological units of time." Inherent in these temporal notions, however, are qualitative aspects. The "generation," for example, connoted a group of people collectively participating in a major single event, such as the World Wars. The "decade" on the other hand, implies a passive stance.

"People are conditioned by the decade," Sontag said. (This can be seen in the trend of people defining their ages as "in my 30s" or "in my 50s.") Every personal decision becomes a "style," and the decade notion of time "allows people to recycle style," she added.

Sontag defined the decade notion as "the crystallization of a consciousness bred by television," citing, as examples, life giving way to lifestyles and politics to personalities. "Decade-talk is journalistic hype and packaging . . . but of what type?" she asked.

"The decade notion is becoming even more ubiquitous . . . but also more distancing," Sontag noted. "We now have a built-in cynicism about time."

Sontag brought up the term "post-modern" as a prime example of the surge to maintain the concept of progress. "It's part of our need to play endgames; it doesn't make sense, but it fulfills the need to reclaim the modern," she said.

That over 1,000 people paid up to \$13.50 each to listen to a scholarly lecture on the illusive nature of the modern, served to punctuate Sontag's contention that we are "the entertainment society" characterized by a heightened sense of self-consciousness.

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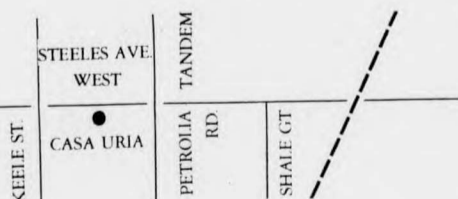
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