

EDITORIAL

The military campus

The fact that we are in the midst of a well-publicized and heavily-promoted war seems to have anaesthetized many students as to the role of universities during war-time. For some of us, however, it has revealed their role to be all too explicit.

We are thinking specifically of the complicity of university and college administrations in fueling the apparatus of war by accepting military research and/or investments on campus.

By doing this, Canadian universities are copying the tradition of many U.S. institutions, which in addition to providing students with an education serve as paramilitary research plants.

The principle of university as a non-partisan centre for the peaceful exchange of ideas has in the last few years been eroded by the rise of scientific research programs funded in large part by the armed forces and their related agencies.

Even York U, considered one of the more "liberal arts" universities, is desperate to increase the number of its professional and science/technology programs to follow the trend of other Canadian schools.

On some Canadian campuses, such as University of Waterloo and McMaster, universities are more and more becoming "technical schools" for specialized private research for those who have the money to purchase the time, facilities and personnel.

Often, university students are attracted to post-graduate careers with companies who have maintained close contact on their campus as employers and financial supporters.

In Waterloo, the fast-growing company, RAYTHEON (which makes missile guidance systems, including those for the U.S. Patriot missiles), has access to an entire engineering faculty as a resource pool — and it's only a 10-minute walk from campus.

The U.S. and Canadian military establishments and their manifold agencies have the desire and the funds to award thousands of military contracts each year to campuses. And university faculties such as engineering, science and mathematics are more than willing to accept these commissions to increase both the quality of their programs and their international prestige as research centres.

While there are some scientists who morally reject the idea of military research on campus, a great many do not question the status quo and in fact are attracted by the large research grants and salaries. Consider the engineering brain drain that was evident a few years ago as Canadian scientists were drawn to the U.S. to work on various components of the classified Star Wars program.

Most campus contracts are directly sponsored by the Canadian Department of National Defense (DND) and the U.S. Pentagon, but there are also an unknown number of subcontracts even harder to trace because they go through a middle agency.

Military research falls into either the classified or unclassified categories, with the higher proportion of it being confidential, and thus not having to be disclosed to the general public.

Legally, groups and individuals that are directly involved in military research on campus have to make their activities public. And York along with a few other progressive universities has a policy not to accept money for research that must remain secret.

Unfortunately, this does not exclude "platonic" investments from DND and the Pentagon for unclassified pure research in the sciences. Even the most seemingly "harmless" data can be rediverted and analyzed for military applications.

In the ivory tower of higher education, most of us don't think about military research during peace. But when our country is actively involved in a major war, the idea of university ethics should come racing to mind.

Although we may find it much more convenient to pursue our degrees and look the other way, liberal Canadian campuses should beware they do not fall into the same role as many of their peer institutions.

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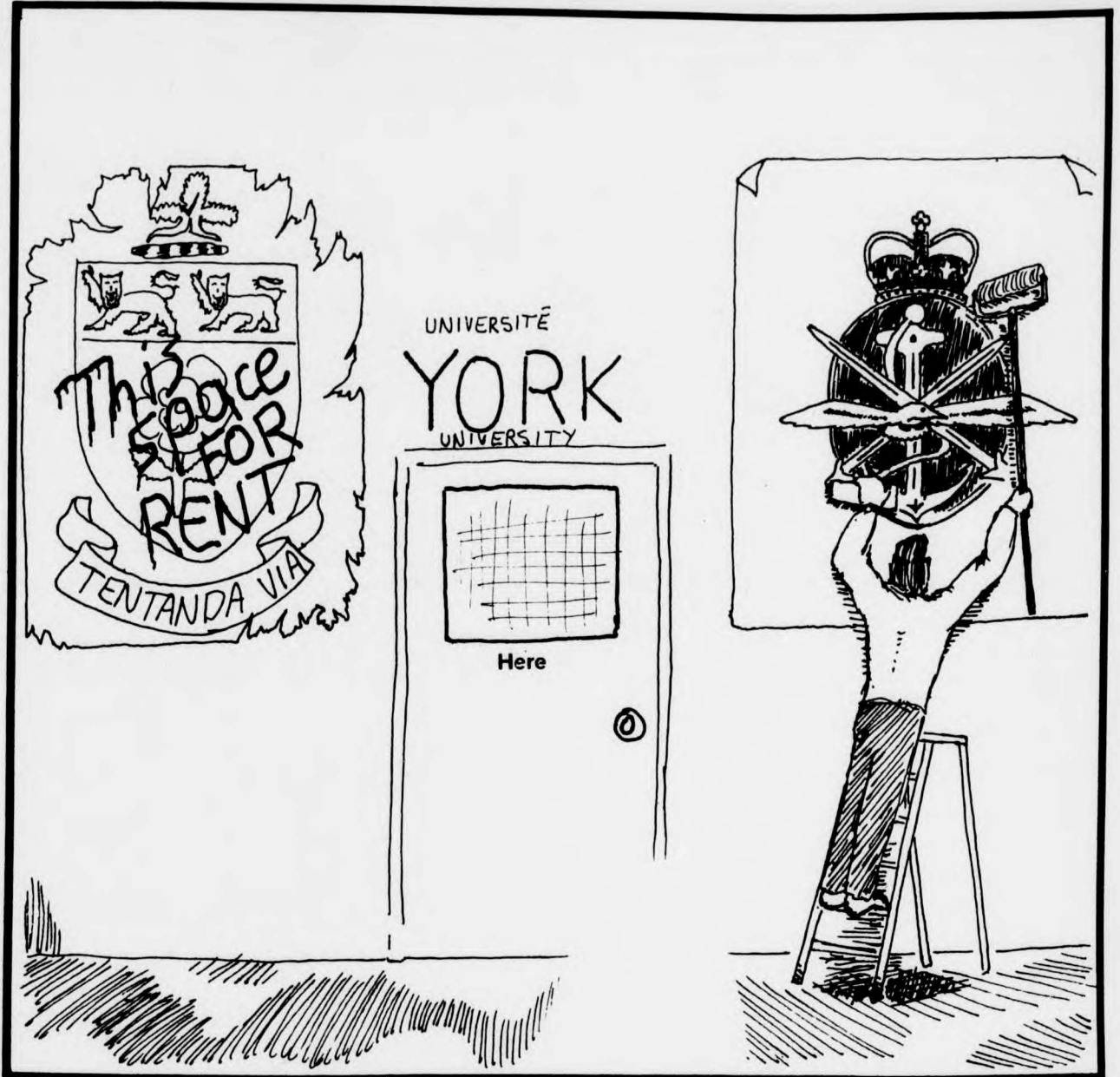
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Rally fails miserably in achieving its goal

To the editor,

The war in the Persian Gulf is a complicated issue; no one will contest that. It stands to reason, then, that such a complicated problem demands solutions that are well thought out.

The York Coalition for Troops out of the Gulf failed to provide these at its anti-war rally Jan. 22, and as a result they lost the opportunity to convince undecided people that their argument was the right one.

One would think that giving sound reasons for peace would have been the primary purpose of the rally, since the demonstrators had the ears of so many who were unaware of the complexities of the issue, and as a result were unsure of their position. Unfortunately, this was not the case.

Instead, the stated primary purpose of the rally was so that "we [you] could have just two hours to present our [your] side of the issue." This kind of statement is extremely dangerous to the anti-war cause for a variety of reasons.

First, as I've attempted to indicate with the square brackets, the sort of language used was a clear indicator that the rally was an elite event. If one was not thoroughly on-side, then one was not really welcome. Ironically, there was so much talk at the rally about "building bridges" to other social interest groups to bolster support for the cause, yet the speakers' attitude served to distance many of the listeners.

Second, there was a clear indication that dialogue of any kind at the rally was unwelcome. This again presented an elitist image for the Troops Out movement and wasted a chance for the demonstrators to elaborate on their position. The resulting appearance was a "knee-jerk" response to the Gulf war: a

response of passion rather than reasoning.

Instead of rebutting the many arguments of those people who do support the war, the coalition members chose to avoid audience questions by largely insulting those of us with differing opinions (opinions, might I remind them, every bit as valid as their own).

In my case, I asked what options other than war the coalition members could advocate regarding the difficult Gulf issue — not an unreasonable question.

Their response was to reiterate that this was "our time" and that any "rude disruptions" were unwelcome. From my position in the crowd, however, a large number of those present (perhaps 40 per cent) applauded my question and were eagerly awaiting an answer.

Sharing the coalition's hatred for war, we also see the need for a reasonable alternative if the peace argument is to be credible. The protes-

ters response to us, however, was admonishment.

I am convinced that the purpose of the rally was greater than simply parading for show and coldly dismissing the views of any opposition. I believe that the coalition wanted to persuade those who were as yet inactive in the peace movement to become informed and join their (our) cause for peace.

Sadly, the rally failed miserably in achieving this purpose. For future rallies at York to be successful, the first objective should be winning over those whom the coalition has alienated.

By welcoming dialogue from people who do not share the same view, and by intelligently addressing the very legitimate concerns of many undecided students, I am confident that I and many others will warm up to the Troops Out side of this very complicated issue.

Patrick Perdue

Government doing their job

To the editor,

I was greatly encouraged when I read the first paragraph of Jean Ghomeshi's recent article in *The Lexicon*. (January 16, 1991 issue). Let me quote the passage that I am talking about.

"...the Tory government in Canada has already committed millions of dollars towards military aggression aimed at Iraq. At the same time, it has administered cutbacks to education, health, and welfare, women's organizations, unemployment insurance and old age pensions."

It is about time we had a government that is doing what a government is supposed to do. Unfortunately, Ghomeshi does not see it that

way and chooses to condemn such policy.

The responsibility of government is to provide internal defense and external defense (a police force and a military force). Government is interfering where it has no business when it gets involved in social work and charitable activity. Those people who like Robin Hood-style government (i.e. one that redistributes wealth in order to fulfill a "social work" agenda) ought to return to the medieval world.

With less money being provided for some of the areas which Ghomeshi referred to, maybe those people in our country who, through irresponsibility and laziness (physical,

cont'd on p. 3