

EDITORIAL

Federal government ignores universities

It took a \$2 million conference in a faraway prairie city to finally get some kind of national dialogue going on post-secondary education, but even then no specific policy recommendations were developed. Last week, provincial and federal politicians, plus representatives of business, labour, universities and colleges, assembled in Saskatoon for the National Forum on Post-Secondary Education. Ironically, the organizers of the forum, the federal government, continue to hide behind the veil of transfer payments, thus putting the blame for university underfunding solely on the shoulders of the provincial government. And from Ottawa's poor performance at the Conference, it looks like things aren't about to change.

According to one top official with the Ministry of Colleges and Universities, federal MPs who were supposed to attend the Conference failed to even make an appearance. Most officials decided to stay back in Ottawa for the historic Meech Lake vote. One wonders if the conference could not have been rescheduled to allow for a proper level of political participation. Even Secretary of State David Crombie, who is responsible for federal subsidization of post-secondary education, failed to attend the majority of the Conference. Unfortunately, it was these very same federal officials who most required a lesson on the funding problems which universities face.

Presently, Ottawa's transfer payments are lumped together for both health and post-secondary education. In 1979-80, these payments provided 52% of the requisite funding for both areas, but in 1986-87, the federal government's contributions only supplied both ministries with 43% of their respective needs. This decline in funding is a result of Bill C-96 which reduces transfer payments by 2% annually, placing provincial governments in a grave dilemma. While Queens Park attempts to improve university education on the one hand, their prime source of funding is slowly diminishing on the other.

And then there's the area of student assistance where Ottawa, for the past five years, has refused to increase the Canada Student Loans from its current level of \$105 per week. Clearly, this kind of assistance barely pays for tuition fees, let alone living allowance, forcing provincial governments to make up the difference to meet the financial needs of students. The federal government must start taking a more innovative, comprehensive approach to post-secondary education.

If post-secondary education is such an important item on the national agenda as the federal government professes, then it's time the issue became a permanent fixture of the first ministers conference. Who would want to listen to a bunch of complaining officials stuck way out in Saskatoon anyway? What was intended to be a huge media event turned into a modest effort at stimulating intergovernmental dialogue on higher education. Even the CBC failed to cover the conference. One can only wonder if even Prime Minister Mulroney gave the Conference a thought in all his Meech Lake glory.

Setting bad precedent

Recently, the Vanier College Council set an extremely dangerous precedent which brings into question the journalistic freedom of all college newspapers. At their October 20 meeting, members of the Council moved to overrule Appendix E of the constitution in order to scrutinize *Vandoo* editor Clark Hoskin's past performance on the paper. According to the constitution, any disciplining of the editor, except in cases involving financial mismanagement, should come from the Vanier Board of Publications. For some reason, this channel of appeal was not used, and instead the Vanier Council circumvented the entire process in order to voice their complaints directly to Hoskin's face.

Admittedly, some of Hoskin's practices such as looking in other people's mail were completely out of line. At the same time, it's extremely difficult for a college paper to fulfill its journalistic mandate in keeping student government in check when that same council is the hand that feeds it. In effect, the college newspaper will be forced to act like the administration's *Gazette*, a mouth-piece for council. While this is not always the case in all colleges, such newspapers still operate at the mercy and now discretion of council members.

It's time that journalistic freedom be secured for all college newspapers by creating an independent inter-college committee to allocate funds to these papers. Irreparable damage has been done to the role of a college publications board in preventing members from restricting the freedom of college editors. It really must have warmed Hoskin's heart to finally receive praise from Council members on *Vandoo*'s latest issue.

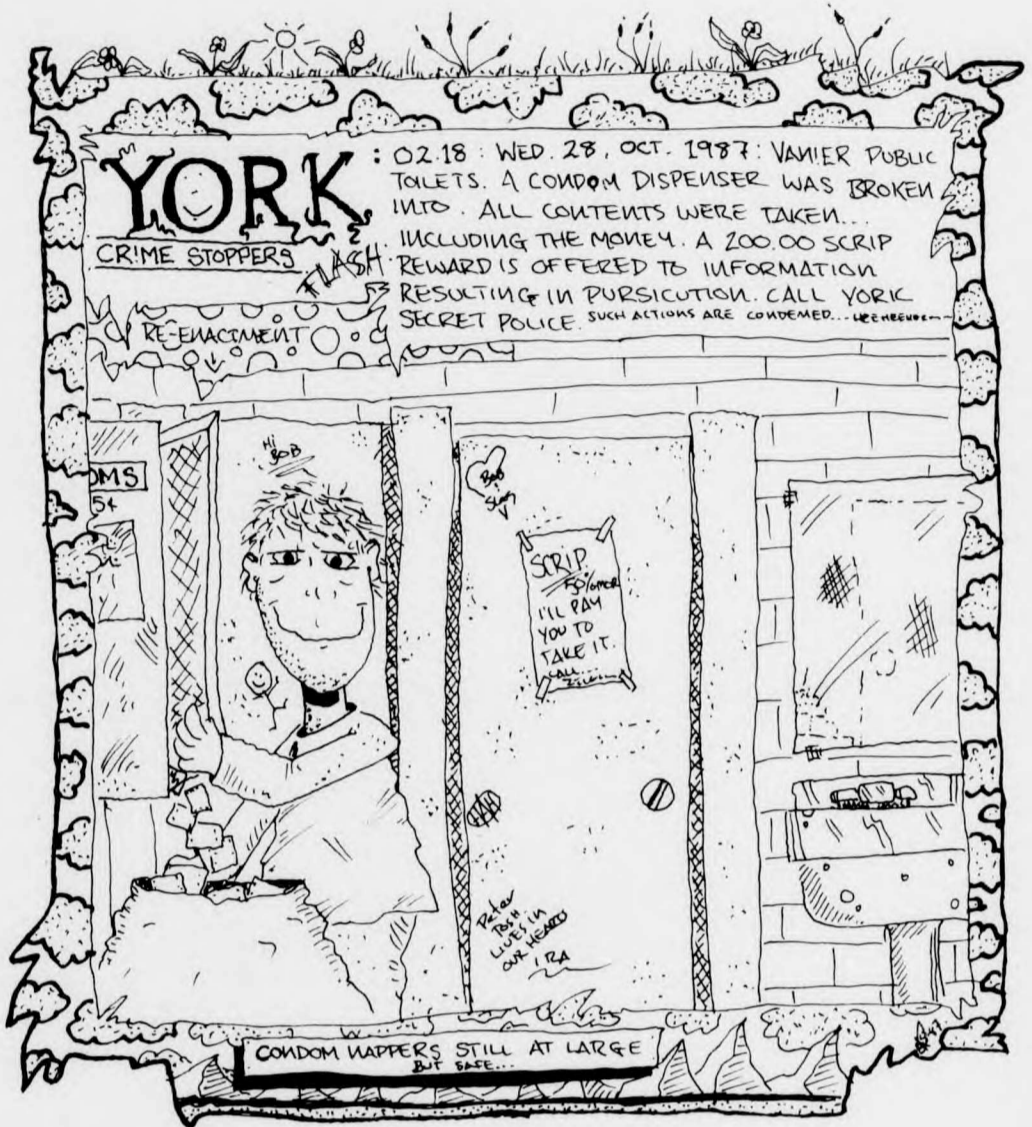
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Hoskin's brave words defended

Editor,
 Strangeness! I've looked through Tracey Reid's article (*Excalibur*, October 29) again and again to find some suitable reason for Vanier Council "disciplining" the *Vandoo* in the way that it did, but I suppose it was edited out. Whatever it was must have been heinous for the Council to remove the barriers to its direct control of the newspaper.

To be worth the effort, a college paper must report news. Doing this means specializing in its own local area and almost immediately coming across a story its College Council doesn't want touched. An editor will become worried and run the story anyway. Council members will then jump up and down on the editor with Reebok-covered feet until he or she accepts that the paper exists only as an instrument of Council. The quality of writing declines after that.

As far as I can tell, Mr. Hoskin is guilty of very little. He has mocked the Council once or twice and written a critical editorial which appears beside an opposing letter from Council. It may be argued that the interests of Vanier College's student body come before those of Vanier College Council, or that criticism of the Council will actually increase its integrity as an institution, but I guess no one in Vanier Council believes any of that.

Biting the hand that feeds you is hard enough without the removal of a newspaper's fundamental right to publish fair comment without fear of reprisal. Hoskin maintains the Vanier newspaper "is here to reflect the views of students and to report on the progress of student government—not to gloss over the bad news. Who would take us seriously any other way?"

These are brave words Mr. Hoskin should not have to eat.
 Michael Adler

A walk on the wild side

Dear Sir or Madam,
 Last year, in order to be close to York, I moved to the Downsview residential area east of Dufferin and south of Finch. In this area there are no sidewalks on any streets except major arteries. Now, I so much enjoy life without sidewalks, I demand that Downsview remove the few existing ones.

Downsview accomplished much by building residential areas without sidewalks. Neither pedestrians nor playing children can clutter these areas. Since cars are parked on both sides of the street, the only place for anyone is the middle of the street. Happily, then, one may drive through these neighbourhoods all day long and not see a single soul.

Sidewalk-free neighbourhoods make Downsview a leader among cities. Other cities are plagued with sidewalk problems, such as children outdoors; people walking rather than motoring-walking to neighbours, to shops, or exercising; reduced noise and fuel pollution. Poor Ottawa has not only sidewalks, but endless jogging paths; worse, it has downtown thoroughfares reserved for pedestrians and still other thoroughfares so reserved on weekends. Fortunately, Downsview neighbourhoods, having no pedestrians, have no need for such walkways.

Downsview, admittedly, has made amends for the sidewalks on major streets. It only partially services them in winter; in effect removing them for much of the season. Several times during winter I have seen people walking right beside the cars and receiving a healthy load of slush

from each passing car. These hapless folk were looking desperately for a sidewalk to walk on but, of course, in vain. They will not, I can assure you, attempt such stunts again.

But there is no reason why Downsview cannot eliminate sidewalks on major streets. The stores do not need them. If people can step directly from their front door into their car (often, there is no other place for them to step, as the driveway is the walk), surely shops can receive people directly from their cars.

A final warning: I recently saw, on a "major street" sidewalk, a young child learning to ride a bicycle. The next day I saw an elderly man using this sidewalk to carry home some groceries, as if nothing were amiss. Here is the consequence, of allowing sidewalks on even the major streets!

David Rudman

Fears of reverse discrimination

Editor,
 After reading your article, "Group appeals law appointment," I feel compelled to comment.

I am in favour of equal opportunity for women, but I fear the underlying message that is knowingly being put to future selection committees by the women who launched the appeal. The message is clearly that if two equally qualified candidates of the opposite sex are being considered for an appointment, the women had better win or the 'shit will hit the fan.' Future selection committees who wish to choose a man over a woman will be intimidated by the threat of discrimination charges.

Equality is one thing while superiority is another. Which of the two is the real goal of these people? You figure it out.

Arthur Harries