

Other Campuses

By ADAM BRYANT

Loto-school

For most students at the University of British Columbia, tuition fees run about \$1,450 per year. One lucky student, however, will only have to pay \$1, thanks to their new student union's lottery that offers the cost of tuition as its grand prize.

Nancy Bradshaw, the Student Union External Affairs Coordinator at UBC, says she hopes the lottery will draw the public's attention to the need for a student grant system in BC, where the provincial government recently abolished student grants in a bid to cut spending.

The student union targets hopes to sell 10,000 of the \$1 tickets with half the proceeds going towards tuition prizes and the other half to its bursary fund.

—*The Cord Weekly*
Wilfred Laurier University

On the pill

Some students at Brown University in Rhode Island have asked the campus health centre to stock cyanide pills, so that in the event of a nuclear war, they could use them to commit suicide, rather than suffer a slow death from nuclear fallout.

The proposal already has the support of 700 students—about 14 percent of Brown's enrolment. A vote on the request itself will be included on the ballot in their student council election to be held this week.

One of the students behind the idea said that even if students turn down the non-binding referendum, it will force some of them to think about the consequences of nuclear war.

Toronto Star

Mustard hot

It is generally believed that to get into university applicants simply need a good high school average and lots of money. This, however, may not be the case for engineering faculty applicants at the University of Waterloo, where many applicants are accepted or rejected on the basis of secret consultations between high school principals and admissions staff.

The engineering department adjusts the marks of Grade 13 applicants up or down by up to 14 marks. The changes are based on Waterloo's ratings of Ontario's high schools which are rated as either 'tough' or 'liberal' markers. The applicants are not informed of the practice or the results.

Dr. Fraser Mustard, one of three Bovey Commission members, criticized the procedure, calling it unfair to students.

"If you want to give a child an equal chance at universities, isn't it fair to tell that child how the university will adjust his marks?" said Mustard. He asked those universities that admit to the practice, including Waterloo and the University of Toronto, to stop using the rating system.

—*Imprint*

University of Waterloo

Opinion

A Little Learning goes a wrong way

By DAVID BYRNES

Saturday Night likes to call itself "Canada's most important magazine." It characteristically runs articles of gigantic scope, presumably offering its readers gigantic insights. If they are what they claim they are, then they have a responsibility to enlighten, not to mystify.

An article on York University that appeared in the magazine's October issue comes close to generating a myth. In his use of York as a symbol of "what's gone wrong" with Canada's universities, David Frum does provide some insights. But his bleak portrayal of York as inhuman and academically weak is not warranted. York has faults, but characterizing it as a failure is inaccurate and irresponsible.

Frum's article, *A Little Learning*, has drawn an indignant reaction from prominent figures in the York community, who charge that it is unfair and bad journalism. Former York President H. Ian Macdonald, one of many people Frum interviewed last spring, had nothing but disdain for the article.

"He didn't seem to be very interested in finding out the true story," Macdonald said, concluding that "he (Frum) came here with preconceived ideas. I have no respect for that kind of journalism."

Kenneth Davey and RW Nicholls of York's Science department, who were also interviewed by Frum, said he had no intention of seriously considering York's merits.

Nicholls said that after talking to Frum he was convinced that he would do a "hatchet job" on York. Davey reported the same thing—that Frum had decided to "do a number" on York. Davey said that when he tried to impress Frum with the accomplishments of the Faculty of Science, "he didn't want to hear about it—he cut me off."

Winter's College Master Maurice Elliott also had some serious complaints about Frum's article. Elliott charged Frum with "indecently" using his words "totally out of context." Elliott said he tried to explain to Frum that York is still growing, and that considering the underfunding here the university has made an "incredible achievement."

In an interview with *Excalibur* Frum admitted that he came on the assignment with a clear idea of what he wanted to say about York and Canadian universities. He explained that *Saturday Night* wanted an article on education; a gigantic subject more suited to treatment in a book than in a magazine article. With the editors of *Saturday Night* he worked out a way to limit his subject.

"They eventually said that the best thing to do is pick out a symbol—and the editors agreed that York was a good symbol—and to cover it as kind of an example of our education system," Frum said.

The basic conclusion of his article—that York is "inhuman, mediocre and underfunded" was established before Frum came here to do his research.

Frum's article also drew criticism from York's acting President William Found. In a letter to the editor of *Saturday Night* Found said that Frum had nostalgically measured York against a bygone ideal of a small, elitist university and not against "the reality of the huge academic task that Canada's universities, including York, have taken on."

In response to Found's criticism, Frum told *Excalibur* that he didn't try to impose his own values on York, but tried to show that the University has failed to live up to the ideals of its own founders.

Frum explained in his article how York did not become the "Ivy League" college that had been the dream of its founders because it was coerced by government to become big. Government was trying to cope with a huge increase in demand for university places created by the maturing baby boom generation. So York became a multiversity, built quickly to educate a large number of Canadians.

What doesn't follow is Frum's conclusion that because York failed to be the institution that its founders initially wanted, it therefore failed to become what a Canadian university should be.

Frum doesn't agree that he criticized York unfairly, saying "I tried to make it very clear that York did have good points, that it did do valuable things."

Frum said the defensive reaction here to his article is typical of a bureaucracy. "I don't expect them to sit up and cheer when I say there are things wrong with the institution."

Frum is right that universities should be self-critical and not complacent. Yet, by subordinating York's many good qualities to his premise that it has basically failed, he fails to divine what the real state of Canadian education is. The many assets that York does possess—many of which, to his credit, Frum lists in his article—should have forced him to reconsider his negative appraisal of York.

The fact that York is succeeding as well as it is in the face of the enormity of its assignment and the province's financial restraints undermines the theses of Frum's article.

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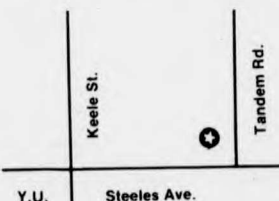
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