

Toy for governments not people

Ontario Place: a misfit and a waste

Shelli Hunter is an Excalibur reporter who spent the summer working at Ontario Place. This is a personal account of working at the Conservative dream.

By SHELLI HUNTER

Ontari-ari-ario Place — the monstrosity of Progressive Conservatism looms from Lake Ontario like an alien misfit.

And there I stand — I am your friendly Ontario Place hostess with my sunny yellow uniform and my Colgate smile.

It took a long time to achieve my aura of fresh-scrubbed pleasantness, so please don't ruffle my feathers. After all, could you retain a sweet smile for nine hours a day?

I suppose you wonder how I acquired my amiability. Perhaps I'd better start from the beginning.

In the beginning

Last winter, several hundred other students and I noticed signs around the campus announcing a wondrous thing: summer jobs. Realizing that such opportunities are scarce we all dashed off to inquire about the mythic Ontario Place and the jobs it offered.

We were herded into a small lecture room, given a talk by a prissy miss and then ushered out in a great flurry for interviews.

The next thing I remember is receiving a charming letter in the mail announcing my acceptance as an Ontario Place Hostess. I was also informed of an impending two day orientation in February.

How I remember that awesome day! With heart fluttering I entered a great room where 249 others sat, sharing my apprehension.

The ordeal began. Several suave bureaucrats introduced themselves and discussed what Ontario Place was and the role we were to play. We were the "cream of the crop." Out of thousands of Ontario students who had applied to work at Glamerville, we were the chosen few.

We were dazzled

How they pampered us! Coffee in the morning, buffet luncheons and steak dinners were designed not only to soothe our palate but to woo our souls. I have to admit that we were all quite dazzled. The prospect of working for the nice people of the Conservative government did not seem so ominous.

The big day in May finally arrived. All the hosts and hostesses tramped off to their training session. Touring the uncompleted site left us still uninformed. Lectures on first aid and what to do in case of a freak out were too nebulous to be properly absorbed. So we all waited patiently for opening day, May 22.

We were all psyched up, anticipating the arrival of huge

crowds. The projected attendance was somewhere around 70,000 — they never showed.

Try hard at first

Day two was a little better and during the next week we really worked. A 12 hour smiling day was a bit hard on everyone and by the end of the first week we almost dropped from fatigue. I've never professed to be a good pr lady but I did my damndest that week.

What really disturbed me was not the charm routine but the incompetency of our supervisors. We were divided into three groups, each group worked in a different area of Ontario Place. Some were assigned to Cinesphere, others worked at the Entrances and the rest worked in those chambers of horrors — the exhibits. I was assigned, of course, to the third.

Left alone

We were all placed in various positions around the exhibits. And it wasn't too uncommon for our supervisors to forget where they placed us. I remember spending a chilly six hours on the roof in 37 degree weather. Not only were my toes numb, but my face nearly froze.

One of the most revolting jobs around Ontario Place was "fish picking." We all donned enormous hipwaders and scampered around Lake Ontario picking up smelts which were dying in droves on the

beaches. By the end of an hour I had one bucket filled with these nauseating creatures. I worked quite slowly because I'm not an industrious fish picker. Another host went and threw all my smelts back into the water. After swearing profusely I retired to a hill and observed the whole process.

People missing

Two months drifted by. To our regret and dismay, we learned that several people had been fired without explanation and others were warned. Obviously, the "nice" people of the Conservative government wanted to teach the naughty hosts and hostesses of Ontario Place a lesson: Sorry kids, you're fired. You should have learned to jump when we cracked our whips. It's alright, there are thousands of students needing summer jobs so you can be easily replaced.

Working under pressure

After that, we all worked under extreme pressure. We couldn't afford to lose our jobs and besides, the Blue Meanies did pay us well.

I didn't hate my job; I loathed it. Dealing with 4,000 school children a day took a lot of stamina. Smiling at someone who just told you to fuck off because you wouldn't admit him to Cinesphere, meant swallowing your pride. Licking the asses of your superiors was humiliating. Refusing to cope with this, I made a lousy hostess.

Money was no object to the

Ontario Place bureaucracy. The thousands of dollars they poured down the drain would make anyone gaze in wonderment. I was told that they spent roughly \$200 each on our uniforms. In the middle of the season they decided to re-design the Exhibits.

The waste of money

This was completed in late August and as Ontario Place closes on Oct. 11, this seemed ridiculous. Besides, they were going to destroy all these

displays to make way for the new ones next year.

Most of the changes and additions did not increase attendance. Many visitors did not react favorably to Ontario Place; many were frankly bored with it. It offers very little. The exhibits were not entertaining and besides Cinesphere there was little else to do on the site but eat and drink.

Ontario Place is an ulcerated starlet. It is aesthetically pleasing, yet its operations are corrupt and unorganized. To speak in cliches, it is truly a product of a bourgeois, capitalist government and so it fails to be truly a place for Ontarions.



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INFORMATION SESSION**

**CAREERS IN
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and
ADMINISTRATION**

DATE: Thursday, October 14th

TIME: 11:00 a.m. — 3:00 p.m.

ROOM: Senate Chambers
S 915 Ross Building

11:00 a.m. — 12:30 p.m.

Foreign Service Officers will speak on
Careers Abroad

12:30 p.m. — 3:00 p.m.

Informal question-answer session on
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Mossey Hall Box Office opens Oct. 12th

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