

Ali betrays central election platform

by GARY SYMONS

By MARTIN ZARNETT

You may be thinking to yourself as you drift through the faceless mass of people in Central Square, 'How can I become involved on campus in a meaningful way?' While there are a number of ways for the average student to get involved, my comments will be confined to those areas relating to student and university government. Unfortunately, no one is going to tell you about the things you are about to read, and you may be more confused after you read than before you started, so be forewarned.

As you may or may not know, student government on campus is extremely decentralized; a number of groups speak for students on campus. What this means is that there is no central place to go to become involved in student affairs. So, depending on what you want to do you have to go to different places. In addition, some positions are more difficult to obtain than others.

The best place to start if you have questions regarding student government is the Council of York Student Federation (CYSF) at 105 Central Square. Sylvia Stanley, the executive secretary of the Council, either knows or will find out the answers to any questions you dare pose. Also, there are usually a number of students who are presently involved who also have a good understanding of the York system.

A number of positions that I will mention below have already been filled. The CYSF positions, as well as most College Council, Senate, and Board of Governors positions, have been decided, since last spring, for the upcoming school year. However, some College Councils provide for first-year reps to be elected during the first few days of school.

If you are a Faculty of Arts student, perhaps the easiest way to become involved in university government is through the Faculty of Arts Council. Faculty Councils exist in other faculties as well, but these are usually filled by this point. According to Marla Chodak, the Secretary of Faculty of Arts Council, approximately 70 to 80 positions will be available this year. This position allows students to sit on council and vote on matters that come before it.

However, the opportunity in this position is not just having a seat on Council, but the ability to sit on various committees of Council. For example, when I was Faculty of Arts Councillor, I sat on the Executive, Research, Grants and Scholarships and Petitions committees. During my tenure on the Petitions Committee, I was able to decide with the other student and faculty members petitions by students for exemptions from faculty-established rules. On the Executive Committee, academic dishonesty appeals as well as other matters were reviewed.

The various College Councils allow for participation by students in all years. Without dealing with the problems, which I will deal with in a later *Zone*, commuter students in some of the colleges are at a distinct disadvantage in that they do not live there full-time. Often these councils are dominated by residence students because it is only those students who vote. In my first year, I only visited my college, Vanier, three or four times. And I was involved! But if you are adventurous and can convince people that you are willing to dedicate yourself, a college is a good place to become involved.

The central student government on campus, CYSF, also has a difficult time attracting students to their committees and to Council. It is not that the work is not interesting, but that information does not flow as well as it should from CYSF to the students. Various committees such as Finance, and Business Affairs give a good overview of the operations of Council as well as providing valuable experience in dealing with a company with a large budget of \$350,000. Other committees such as the Social and Cultural and the External Affairs also provide excellent opportunities for students to learn and participate in their respective fields.

In the area of "filled positions" the Senate, Board of Governors, CYSF, College Executive positions and other university advisory committees are examples of excellent, responsible positions available to students on campus. I am mentioning these because if you enjoy participating in some of the other areas available this year, next year you should attempt to fill one of these more senior positions. All it takes is a lot of work and a little guts.

In the area of University Advisory Committees, the University Food and Beverage Services Committee (UFSBC), the Residence Budget Committee, and the Parking Committee offer real ways to improve conditions at York and have a say in the day-to-day operations if you have constructive ideas. The people in charge of and involved in these committees are receptive to such student input.

Obtaining a position on one of these committees, however, is more difficult. Depending on the position one wants, a student would have to contact the department in charge of a particular committee. This year's calendar has some information. Pages J59-J60 deal with College Councils and Student Representation on university committees. In this way the administration has been somewhat helpful in that there is finally some consolidation of information for students. What is needed in the long run is a reorganization of student government on campus, so that positions will be allocated and organized in one place. This will also be discussed in a future *Zone*.

The last area of participation is to get involved in campus media. *Excalibur* and Radio York are excellent ways to delve into the arena of campus politics and other events. But whatever you do, I suggest you do participate in something. The worst thing you can do is not get involved. School by itself may get you good marks, but then again it may not. University life involves participation and it is through these activities you stop being just a number or just a face in a class, and become part of the university. Challenge yourself. You won't be sorry.

There's nothing more unbearable than a political leader that thinks he's been elected God, so I was somewhat upset when I found out our new prez, Reya Ali, is entertaining such delusions.

The matter of Ali's infallibility came up on Monday when he announced he's pulled a 180 degree turn on CYSF's policy towards the Ontario Federation of Students. In short, Ali has decided to pull out of the provincial student lobby group, opting for a CYSF sponsored lobby acting only on York's behalf. That in itself doesn't bother me too much, but the way Ali is going about it bothers me a lot.

Last March, when Ali was just another presidential hopeful, he took a moderate, reasonable position on the question of OFS membership. Essentially, Ali said CYSF should not only retain its membership, but should try to improve its own pathetic level of participation in the organization's activities. Only if the OFS did not "respond in kind" by increasing its activities at York would Ali ask students to support his leaving OFS.

The new plan, which doesn't seem reasonable at all, will have Ali and his executive council trying to ram a motion through council on September 18 to pull out of OFS. If that motion

passes, as I'm sure it will, CYSF will drop OFS and use the \$30,000 membership fee to fund its own research and lobby group. That in itself is fine, if it works, but again, it's how CYSF is going about it that bothers me.

First of all, Ali's new policy is an absolute betrayal of one of his most significant election promises. He promised to give the OFS people a chance to prove themselves, but he's already started moving on his plan to withdraw without even informing the federation's executive. Worse, he's also decided not to inform students of his plan and has refused to give students a chance to voice their opinions on the issue.

Regardless of how I feel about CYSF's relationship with OFS, and I'll admit there are some problems, I cannot condone Ali's arbitrary decision making. He may think he's infallible, but I'm not convinced. Before taking such a drastic step most political leaders, at any level, would take the time to listen to their constituents' concerns. It seems unjustifiably arrogant that Ali openly refuses to listen to his.

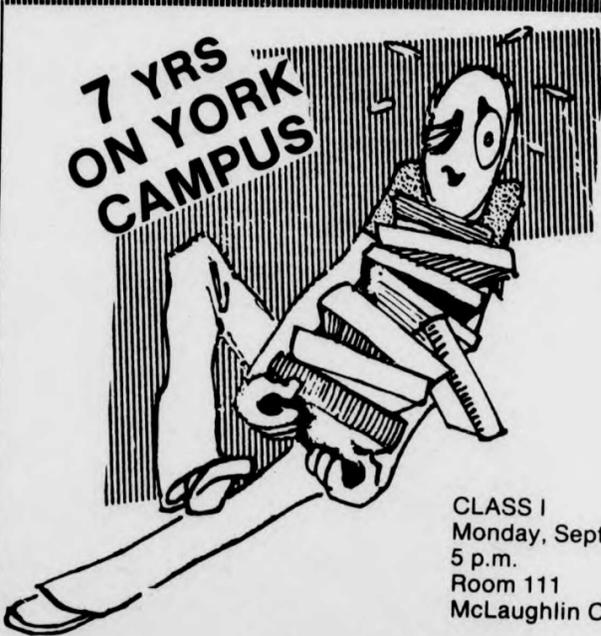
For that reason, and because the problem still needs more thought, I hope council won't be buffaloed into blindly passing the motion until the student body at large has had a chance to study the problem.

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ALEX FOORD

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