

Andrea Davidson:

Portrait of a woman dedicated to dance exploration

W. Hurst

Eight years after Andrea Davidson quit dancing completely, she was back onstage and called "the find of the season" in a review of Les Grands Ballets Canadiens.

In 1974, Davidson had to leave the National Ballet of Canada because of a severe injury, but physical recovery led to a personal re-evaluation.

Forced out of the performing

community, she studied art history and languages at the University of Toronto; she "wanted to see more than just dance."

She couldn't have seen much more because within two years she was teaching dance at various schools in Quebec. Two years later, Davidson was performing again, for Entre-Six in Montreal.

When this small ballet company

folded, she didn't seek a principal position with another ballet company. Classical ballet repertory was too confining; it always had been.

As early as 1970, she studied in Europe before joining the National Ballet of Canada. At that time, it was 'de rigueur' for a National Ballet School graduate to go directly to that company.

Once with the company, she sought further stimuli, and studied in New York. Davidson suggests that the foot injury made her departure from the company immediate instead of eventual.

Her move after Montreal was to Toronto, and to modern dance. "It wasn't a conscious move on my part. It just evolved out of what was happening in my life at the time," she said.

At Toronto Dance Theatre and Pavlychenko Studio, she worked with people like Kathryn Browne, a woman who used a vocabulary of an entirely different nature than classical ballet.

However, despite modern dance classes and workshop performances, Andrea Davidson found herself auditioning for Les Grands Ballets Canadiens. Now a senior artist, she performs the more traditional pieces in the company repertory, such as "Serenade" and "Concerto Barocco".

However, Les Grands shows a variety of works that companies of comparable size wouldn't touch.

such as "Soaring" by Doris Humphrey and "Tellurian" by Linda Rabin. This is probably the appeal for Davidson. She said, "It's entirely valid that a company should be able to interpret both contemporary and more traditional works. This company takes risks."

Davidson has taken risks, too. She's been booed by an audience in a workshop and now laughs it off. Speaking of the value of the whole creative experience, she avoids sounding trite:

"I feel I can express something pure, something beautiful that might touch people in a special way. I think it's important for everybody to have this....I feel committed to dance and it was a long search."

Les Grands Ballets Canadiens
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In Defense of Our Rights and Our Incomes (A JOINT STATEMENT FROM ALL CAMPUS UNIONS)

On 21 September 1982, the Conservative Government placed before the Provincial Legislature, Bill 179, A Wage Restraint and Administered Prices Programme. The following is our understanding of what the passage of this legislation will mean to you, an employee of York University and a citizen of Ontario.

THE EFFECTS ON YOUR INCOME

- Employees who belong to certified bargaining units at York will be limited for the 1983-84 contract year to compensation rate increments of 5 percent, including salary, fringe benefits and any other monetary perqs. (Lower paid employees may be awarded increments slightly in excess of 5 percent to bring them to a \$1,000 increment on a full-time compensation rate, but only if the employer agrees to it.)
- Employees belonging to bargaining units which did not complete negotiations before 21 September 1982—for example, the Operating Engineers and the Canadian Guards Association—are limited additionally to 9 percent increments for 1982-83.
- And non-certified employees—for example, the P and M staff—are limited to no more than 5 percent for 1983-84; they could get less than 5 percent or even face rollbacks in existing compensation rates.

THE BILL UNDERMINES YOUR RIGHTS

The economic restriction is only one aspect of this legislation. Under the guise of an economic policy, Bill 179 threatens seriously to undermine principles fundamental to the freedom of the university and its employees in a democratic society.

1) Removal of All Meaningful Collective Bargaining

The Act undertakes to remove all meaningful collective bargaining over terms and conditions of employment, a right hard won in our society over the past century. For rather than simply constraining the size of financial settlements as was done in the federal anti-inflation legislation of 1976, Bill 179 extends for one year the existing compensation plan, with the 5 percent increment. In other words, collective agreements are prevented from expiring. The Labour Relations Act ties "good faith" bargaining to the expiry dates of contracts—for example, the requirement on both parties to discuss seriously all proposals placed before them within ninety days of the expiry of the agreement, access to conciliation, mediation and arbitration for settling disputes once the contract is about to expire or expires. Collective bargaining will become "collective begging."

2) Lack of Accountability

Furthermore, a tribunal called the Inflation Restraint Board will be created to administer and apply the detailed regulations required by the Act. Made up of three government appointees, this Board will be the sole interpreter of the many

ambiguities of the Bill, will be empowered to order roll-backs and pay-backs, and will decide upon all requests for exemptions from specific provisions. Yet, this Board is accountable to no one; there will be no requirement to hold hearings, nor to provide reasons for its decisions in writing or any other form. The powers given to this body are flagrantly anti-democratic.

3) The Threat to the Autonomy of the University

Bill 179 poses a serious threat to the autonomy of the universities. This Act represents another attempt to put the universities more tightly under the control of the state, particularly when coupled with other proposed legislation and planned policies of the Ministry of Colleges and Universities, such as 1) the proposed deficits legislation which could place a university under a government appointed trustee if its financial policies are not approved; 2) possible changes in the funding formula which would undermine the principle of universal access to post-secondary education (and in York's case, result in much lower income over the next several years than the Administration has been anticipating); and 3) the new practice of the Ministry of providing "special funds" for programmes approved by them even while squeezing the financial support for general operating budgets controlled internally by each university.

DOES THIS HERALD THE END OF COLLECTIVE BARGAINING IN ONTARIO?

Some Queen's Park observers have concluded that the government's intention is for the long term elimination of collective bargaining from public sector employees, even after the removal of the 9 and 5 percent maxima. But this will not happen if the government is confronted with an effective protest over this method of dealing with economic recession and the removal of rights and practices so essential to democratic society.

WHAT CAN WE DO!

Public meetings and rallies on university campuses and among other public sector employees will be taking place over the next two to three weeks. The campus unions at York have met and will continue to meet to plan collective action against the government's action. As it is expected that Bill 179 will be placed for final reading on or about 9 November, WE URGE YOU TO ATTEND:

JOINT UNIONS FORUM ON BILL 179
TUESDAY, October 26, 1982
12:00 - 2:00 in the Senate Chamber

- To obtain more information about the impact of Bill 179
- To join in protesting this legislation
- To plan further action to stop this attempt to remove our rights

This Statement has been Prepared by All Campus Unions (CUEW, CUPE, CGA, CUOE, YUFA AND YUSA)