

Excalibur

Everything secret degenerates; nothing is safe that does not show it can bear discussion and publicity
—Lord Acton

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If at first you don't succeed -- unionize

Everyone, from York president Ian Macdonald to the ordinary professor in the street, knows now that the certification of York's faculty as a union is a foregone conclusion. The final decision on certification should be handed down by the Ontario Labour Relations Board within a month. It will be positive.

But will it be a blessing?

Unionization has come to be looked upon as everyman's cure-all in an ailing society. The tactic is wending its way upward through the social strata: professionals everywhere are doffing their tweed and pin-striped robes and donning the garb of the oppressed worker.

"If at first you don't succeed, unionize," has become the watchword of the day.

In many cases, unionization is both a just and a necessary prescription. In the case of university faculty, however, it is not. And there are a variety of reasons.

Whatever their advantages, unions tend to discourage excellence. No one likes a whiz-kid or a show-off, and that's why unions impose ceilings on, say, the number of toothpaste tubes a factory worker can package in a day. The mediocre becomes the ideal. Will a faculty union place limits on research and scholarship, ceilings on participation in university affairs, quotas on hours spent in preparing lectures or in marking essays? Just wait and see.

UNIONS PROMOTE TUNNEL VISION

Unions have a tendency, an understandable one, to develop a form of tunnel vision: what's bad for us is absolutely bad; what's good for us is absolutely good. The union becomes so immersed in promoting its own interests that it loses all perspective on larger issues, such as: what is good for the university? or, what is good for society?

Hand in hand with this narrowing of vision is the tendency of the organization to guard itself against infiltration by "outsiders" who do not share its collective aspirations. This tendency may develop to the point where workers are expelled from or refused entry to the union for purely political reasons.

FORTRESS OF INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM

In the fortress of intellectual freedom, which is what universities purport to be, this is a harrowing prospect. The faculty union will limit personal freedom: it will dictate the behaviour, performance, professional objectives and, to some extent, the beliefs and values of its members. And if, as is entirely possible, York's faculty union becomes a closed shop (meaning that a professor has no choice but to resign his post if he does not want to join), the union will be able to back up its dictation with the threat of removal of dissenting professors.

One of the basic powers of any union is the right to strike, and a faculty union would be no exception. A strike of professors would mean the suspension, not only of teaching, but also of research. Professors would have to abandon their labs and their books for the duration of the strike. Oscilloscopes, telescopes, microscopes and typewriters will sit quietly gathering dust in the academic darkness. How utterly absurd.

Canada is currently afflicted with many ailments, not the least of which is "union mania". Everybody, it seems, is crying, "Oppression!" But as often as not, it's like crying Wolf.

That professors at York earn an average salary of over \$21,000 is not one of the basic injustices of our society; it is not one of the basic threats to our collective well-being. Yet, you may rest assured that a faculty union will do its utmost to make it seem so.

The plight of Ontario's professors is a red herring.

One professor at York confided to Excalibur this week that the way for professors to protect their jobs in the face of cut-backs in government funding is to voluntarily accept an across-the-board salary cut. As naive and far-fetched as it sounds, it is a democratic suggestion. It is democratic to make sacrifices in order to protect the common good. But in this era of the special interest as master, the mere idea of widespread altruism seems, not only far-fetched, but utterly ridiculous.



Volton: "Hell no, I won't go."

A very modest proposal

To: Michael Meighen,
President,
The Progressive Conservative
Party of Canada

Dear Sir:

I am dismayed by the news of your fruitless search for a successor to the most honourable and supportable Robert Stanfield. While 15 men of good standing have seen their duty and placed their names for your consideration, I fear that none, have the charisma, coupled with intellectual integrity, necessary to wrestle the leadership from the Liberals, while democracy remains intact.

Alas, your front-running candidate seems to be a woman. 'Tis a pity International Women's Year has ended, rendering her candidacy tenuous at best. Seeing no end to difficulties in returning your party to its rightful place, that of government of Canada, I would like to make the following proposal — that the Progressive Conservative Party draft Hugh Ian Macdonald to lead the party in spirit and in the polls.

I understand full well that Mr. Macdonald does not leap from the tongue as the most likely candidate, but after you hear the following reasons, you will realize that not only is the present president of York University a likely candidate, he is the sole candidate of merit your party should consider.

The PC party has been han-

dicapped since '68 by the easy philosophising of Trudeau. As recently as a week ago one veteran Ottawa correspondent went so far as to say the Mr. Trudeau makes all past prime ministers seem "intellectually bankrupt".

Only with an academic can one defeat an academic, and Mr. Macdonald's academic credentials easily match those of Mr. Trudeau. A Rhodes scholar, Mr. Macdonald graduated from Oxford and has for the past two years governed one of Canada's largest universities. While in England, he played hockey on the varsity team, enabling him to remain in touch with his Canadian heritage.

Aside from being academically unimpeachable, Mr. Macdonald has extensive practical background. As a civil servant and economic advisor to the Ontario government, Mr. Macdonald was conversant with the economic problems facing a modern, expanding economy in the context of a shrinking, agrarian base and established himself as a lucid interpreter of economic trends.

It was this singular ability which soon made Mr. Macdonald the government's chief economic advisor, regarded above the cadre of advisors governments have at their disposals, and paved the road to prosperity for Ontario citizens and businessmen. I need not remind you of the sudden shift of fortune which stung the Ontario government soon after Mr. Mac-

donald's departure from that scene.

It did not take long for Mr. Macdonald, once he became president of York, to reverse the course towards bankruptcy which the university was seemingly headed on. A year and a half later, York is solvent, and free from the problems which forced his predecessor to resign in humiliation and shame.

Mr. Macdonald is also a man with a high profile, having been written about and published extensively in the Toronto Star and the Globe and Mail on economic concerns facing universities and Canada. In these lengthy pieces, he was seen, not as an academic making captious objections over trifling details, but as a man with his finger on the pulse of the nation, understanding its plight and present course and seeking positive means of altering that course. One only needs to quote from a speech of Mr. Macdonald.

"I am delighted to find strong support of my views that tinkering with the machinery of governance should be a secondary pursuit... Canada has survived and flourished because the hearts of men and women are stronger than the articles of constitutions."

Finally, let us briefly touch on the man, Macdonald. Mr. Macdonald is incessantly on the prowl for ways of improving the lives of those he can affect.

The PC party needs a dynamic leader. Mr. Macdonald will prove to be a man for all citizens.

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