

Sewell and Campbell clash on power definition

By MIKE SAVAGE

A small but enthusiastic group of York students and the public gathered in Holy Trinity Church Tuesday night to discuss "People and Power." This was the last of a three part series which attempted to take the university into the community.

Students from York's Sociology 378 and Social Science 343 listened to a variety of speakers on the forum controlled by York television coordinator, Stanley Burke.

John Sewell, radical alderman for Ward 7, said "we're all involved in politics, like it or not. We have no choice anymore. That really means that everyone is a politician. The interesting thing is when you reduce that down to a level of city politics you find in trying to deal with city politicians, the guys who have been elected, is that they don't think that normal people who live in the city are politicians. In fact, if you go through this funny process called an election, you're the politician in the city."

It's from that analysis that you see why politicians are not very happy people in communities getting together and trying to help make political decisions, Sewell said. "We're just trying to exercise some basic rights in which politicians say, 'You guys haven't been elected. You're just an informal group. You aren't responsible. You aren't representatives like we are. We're the politicians. We make the decisions.'"

"The whole movement of citizens groups is an attempt to get away from that and say 'Hey lookit, we're all involved. We all want to participate in all sorts of decisions that are being made about our environment, about our community, about our street. And you run into a real power thing. Politicians think you just can't play that game.'"

"Community groups at the moment are basically doing a very defensive thing. They found politicians are coming along and making decisions which are hurting them. People in com-

munities are basically trying to say, 'Well just wait a minute. Please don't do that to us.'

Margaret Campbell, who lost out to William Dennison in Toronto's last mayoralty race, said "To me the city is people. It's terribly important that we keep this definition in front of us by thinking about the power and the people."

"We must make an effort to involve citizens in the decision-making process. It hasn't been an experiment which I think has been really that successful. If people stay away in droves, then it gives opportunity to politicians who fit the description that Sewell gave."

"One of the interesting things that has been happening in Toronto, at least, has been the fact that the small 'c' conservatives have certainly become the radicals in the eyes of the administration."

"If you examine most of the issues which have created a furor in the area in the past year it has been a furor of people who want to conserve. They want to protect their area. They don't want change. Because they treat situations in this way suddenly they are the radicals that terrorize people."

Responding to Campbell's criticism, Sewell said, "Buildings now will last a long time. We will have a very static city. That's not within our concept of cities. That's why people are interested in conserving. Maybe we should save some of the things we've got."

On the topic of power and money, Sewell said, "Power has been accumulated over the years in terms of money. The economic threat of power is not dangerous. It's the one that's exercised every single day. It gets to politicians all the time, so they sell out and they do what the forces who have got the money are interested in doing."

"We're trying to develop alternative forums of politics which involve an awful lot of people. The reason they involve an

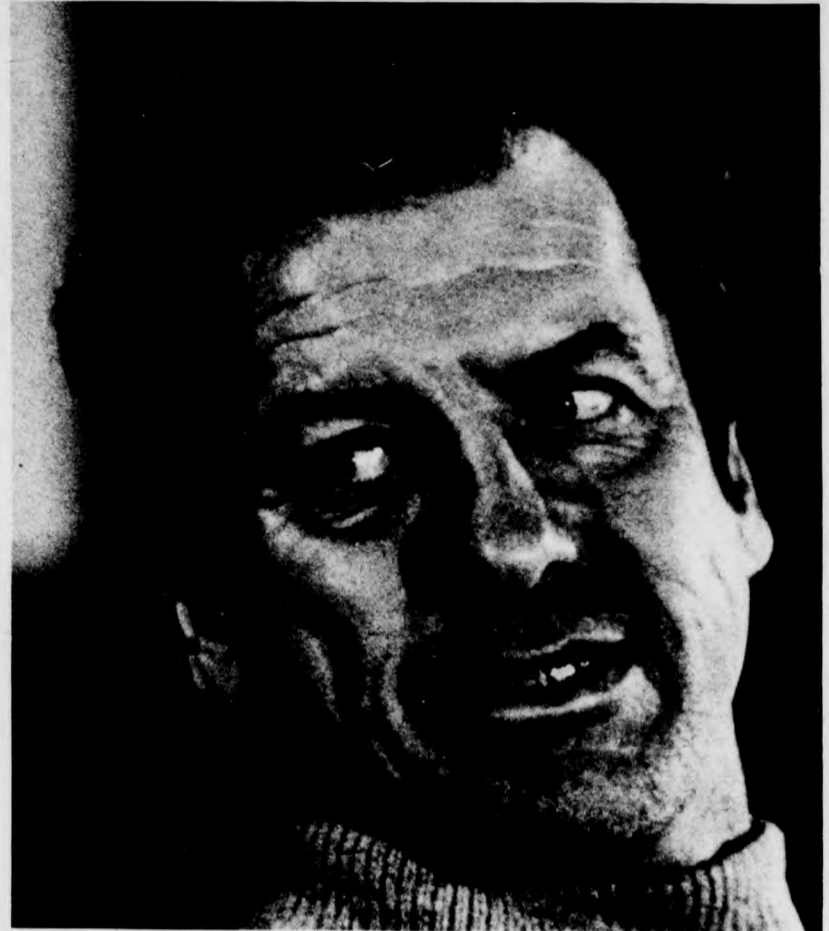
awful lot of people is that's the only way you can get the power. The ultimate thing which threatens the politicians is the fact that he is going to get dis-elected."

Stewart Crysdale, chairman of Sociology at Atkinson, said that the city is becoming more static due to large scale. "Scale does affect the quality of life itself", he said. Sewell replied that tools to get at the people haven't been developed yet. He mentioned tenant groups "who are going after control over management."

Sewell said, "It's the old classic case. We want to control the people who affect them directly. I would think that within a year they're going to gain complete management control of their buildings."

On the subject of the power of city engineers Ed File, head of the Canadian Urban Training Project at York, said, "They don't build things that involve tearing down houses through rich people's communities. They build them through communities of people that don't have control."

Campbell's political rhetoric droned through the old church, a contrast to Sewell's style of talking into the table most of the night. File and Crysdale remained quiet, looking uncomfortable in the sea of political verbiage. Burke, the impeccable moderator, looked interested and awake throughout the forum.



Stanley Burke has been moderating the series of debates called What Kind of Toronto? Tuesday night's edition was called People and Power.

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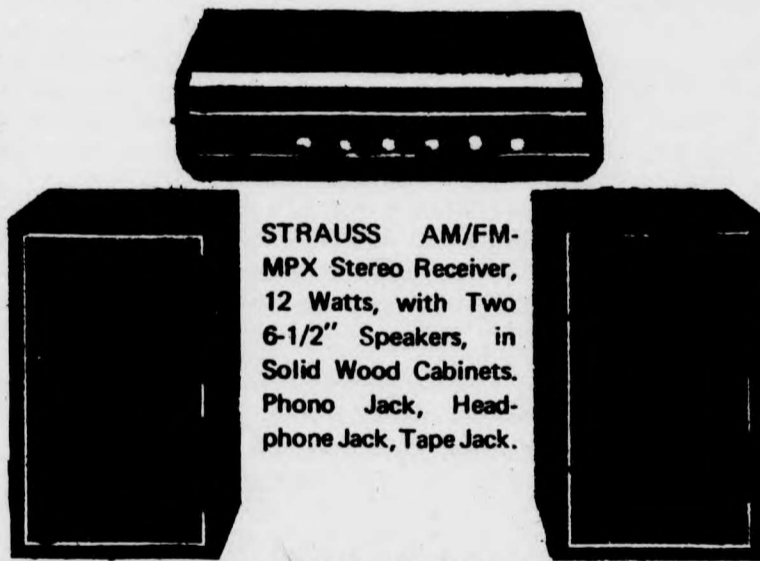
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