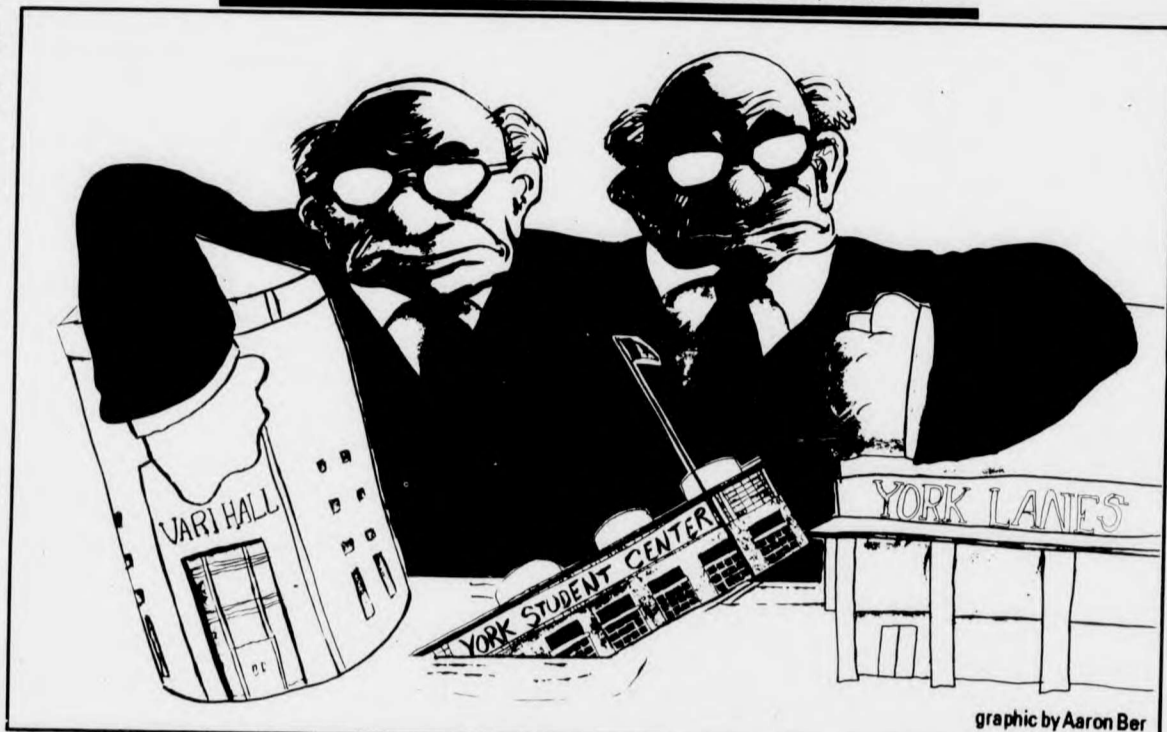


# editorial

Wednesday November 11th, 1992 • Volume 27, Issue 14



graphic by Aaron Ber

## Take direct control over Student Centre

You may be surprised to discover that you're paying \$17.25 for fast food joints in the Student Centre and you're not even getting a free hot dog for it.

Since they voted to financially support a student centre in 1987, students have been told *their* building will run on different principles than the university, which seems more concerned about cutting costs than serving students in recent years. Unfortunately, after four and a half years it's getting harder to tell the difference.

The 1987 referendum vote showed overwhelming support from York's population for the building of a student centre. Students agreed to pay \$35 per full course load (30 credits) over a period of 35 to 40 years to pay for the cost of building.

The Student Centre corporation, run by a student-majority board which includes university administrators, was set up to supervise the construction and operation of the new building. The basis of their business plan included a food court which would attract private companies like Scott's Kentucky Fried Chicken and Shopsy's to help pay for the running of the building. Plans also included a large restaurant pub (The Underground) and space for service-oriented clubs and student organizations.

In 1989, increased construction costs forced a \$10 levy increase — students were now paying \$45 each for a building still under construction.

One and a half years late and about \$7 million over budget, the Student Centre opened in the summer of 1991. Since then, we've been rocked by a recession and the administration has opened the doors to a competing mall right next door.

In its first year of operation, the Centre lost a slew of cash and had to re-assess its business plan. Earlier this year, the Centre's board decided to start using students to subsidize the running of the building. Students now pay \$62.25 each — and \$17.25 of this contributes not to paying off the construction costs but to the *operating costs* — something that will never be paid off.

Although this changed the terms by which students had agreed by referendum to pay for the Student Centre, it wasn't accompanied with any changes on how the building would be run.

Gary McNealy, the chair of the Student Centre board,

claimed one of the reasons for the hike was an imminent threat of the York administration taking over control of the student-run building. But oddly enough, for a group intent on taking it over, the administration was quick to bail out the centre to the tune of \$292,000 last year. We don't buy that excuse.

The initial business plan has gone array. Only the extra \$400,000 collected from the student levy increase will help the operation break even this year.

If the Student Centre wants to use student money to pay for the building's operations, that makes us shareholders in the Student Centre. Which means we should be getting more out of it — something other than "Would you like fries with that?"

What we have in mind is giving students control — *real* control — over what gets dished out in the Centre's serveries. If we're going to pay hundreds of thousands of dollars to operate a food court, we shouldn't have to put up with second-rate chain outlets.

And we don't need to, either. For that money, we can do it our way — and that doesn't mean Burger King. It means student-owned and student-operated food services.

One of the most popular operations in York's short history was a restaurant-snack bar called the Ainger, made famous by serving high quality and inexpensive food. It gave students the opportunity to get some valuable on-the-job training as managers and wildly successful. It was shut down a couple of years ago by York's administration to make room for a private company.

It's not such a farfetched idea. You don't have to look far to find highly successful examples of this scheme.

We're not saying this move would solve all the Student Centre's troubles. But we are saying that there are other options for the Student Centre board to consider. And they should start considering them, since the current path is leading to dissatisfied students and disappearing revenues.

If instead they considered giving students a bigger stake in the student centre project, they might find a lot more options opening up. Voice your ideas about the future of the Student Centre at the corporation's general meeting scheduled for next Tuesday, Nov. 17, 1 to 2:30 PM in 313 Student Centre.

JM

### • From our Student Centre files:

1987

• March 1987 Referendum to build Student Centre results: 2,366 vote YES, 554 vote NO.

• A condition of the 1987 referendum: "The levy will not be collected until the year the Centre is operational."



• Student Centre manager Rob Castle, at the time employed by York's central student government to research the Student Centre project, wrote in March, 5 1987

*excilbur*: "We have always maintained and continue to maintain that it is inherently unfair to ask students to pay for a building in advance of construction, if they never have the opportunity to use it."

Fees were collected for two years before students could use the building.

• Predicted Cost of Student Centre: \$16 million

• Actual Cost: \$23 million

• Construction scheduled to begin: Feb 2, 1989

• Expected completion date: Feb. 22, 1990

• Actual completion date: Summer, 1991.

1989

• The York University Development Corporation signs leases with a variety of food outlets, breaking two promises with the Student Centre Corporation.

The first, a verbal agreement, guaranteed that the Student Centre's food services would be limited to one sit-down restaurant.

The second, a written contract, assured the Student Centre operators that the York administration wouldn't open any food outlets which compete directly with the food court outlets.

The SCC considers suing the administration in March 1989, but instead negotiates a compensatory agreement with the administration to protect their food court revenue.

## staff

### BY-ELECTIONS (again)

• by-elections for the position of graphics co-ordinator will be held tomorrow, Thursday, Nov. 12 at 5 PM.

• it is a volunteer position that will require about 10 hours/week.

• if interested please talk to Pat

## Photoworkshops

When? Friday November 20

Where? In the excal office

How? Come by and sign up

Who? Excil photo editor, Rose Ann Bailey

## Black Caucus

Who's writing about your issues?

**MAKE SURE YOU ARE AFRICAN-BLACK HISTORY MONTH ISSUE BLACK WRITERS CAUCUS**

excilbur Black Writers Caucus next meeting Tuesday November 17 at 5:30pm in the excal office

# excilbur

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## excalendar

Thursday, Nov 12

Production meeting at 1:30 pm

Staff meeting at 5 pm

By-elections and

discussing CUP membership

All events in the *excilbur* office

### Piece of mind:

"Men die sooner, men work too hard, men have trouble being close to anybody."

— Michael Kerman explains why men need their own liberation movement (see pg. 11).