

LETTERS

Nurses react to axing of Health Services at York

To the editor,

We are writing to point out the errors and misconceptions in your March 4 article, "Health Services axed."

The university officials quoted seem to have little idea of what their health service actually does, and what the mandate for a university health service is.

To say that the service "existed primarily for referrals" is an insult to the hard-working, caring doctors who have seen so many students through lingering colds, flu, exam jitters, birth control problems or sexually-transmitted infections.

None of these complaints would be referred to specialists or hospitals, but are of serious concern to the particular student.

It is also unrealistic to say that Health Services was fulfilling the purpose of an emergency ward, but was inadequate due to the lack of x-rays or bone-setting facilities. Such facilities would be out of the question because of the expense; no other

university health service, doctor's offices or clinics have them.

Another reason given for closing the Health Service is the proximity of York Finch Hospital. If this makes us redundant, why is the UofT Health Service thriving when it is just a few minutes walk from all the downtown teaching hospitals?

Hospital emergency wards are for just that, emergencies. To suggest that they should be clogged with cuts, colds, headaches and cramps is irresponsible.

If Health Services was inadequate, it was because York allowed it to be so.

The problem lay in the management. If we had been in a more central location in a high profile setting, if our presence had been more highly publicized, and if our services had been expanded to include health education, we would have attracted more business. And that, despite all these other excuses, is why York is closing us down.

We did not generate a profit. The bottom line is money.

The new medical clinic that is replacing us will be a private, profit-making operation, and in this transition, the students will be the losers.

We perform many services now that are not covered by OHIP and therefore will not be available in future. For example, short-term counselling, diet programs and nutritional advice, Tylenol for headaches, quick blood pressure checks, not to mention free condoms.

We seriously question the state-

ment that "the priority of the clinic will remain in the student body's best interest." The first priority of the new clinic will be the almighty dollar.

Last but not least, there is another error in the article that we would like to correct, and that is the statement that except for the doctors, the remainder of the Health Services staff will remain after the move.

The two nurses signed below will be unemployed as of April 30th.

Only Pat Valle, the Head Nurse, is being kept on in a health education capacity.

As medical personnel whose first priority is to serve people, not dollars, this closing is disturbing to us. It seems that York University is losing its humanity in its quest for a profit. It is a sad day for us all!

Nina Gallagher
Marnie Graham
Health Service Nurses

Equal enforcement for smoking laws

To the editor,

I am unhappy with many things at York. It is certainly not a paradise, and there is not a hell of a lot that I can do to change things. But there is one thing that I would like to try to effect.

The quality of air in the Central Square area sucks. I have noticed that there are many signs that promise fines of up to \$1000 if one is caught smoking. I do not care about the debate about smokers' vs. non-smokers' rights, this debate is not relevant to the question at hand. The question which I wish to address is the equal enforcement of laws.

It is my understanding that security has been provided by the university to protect university property only. Why else would the uniformed staff walk through Central Square and ignore the smoking that is going on? Could it be that enforcing the by-law would mean that the fine would be paid to the municipality rather than to the university? Is this why security is so quick to fine someone for parking illegally because this fine is paid to the campus? Security arrives quickly enough if someone is damaging university corporate property, but where are they when a student is having their car broken into?

There are many reasons to oppose

security's desire to have their personnel become "special" constables, with the ability to carry handcuffs, etc. The biggest problem seems to be that the current personnel cannot be trusted to make the correct decision if given discretionary powers. They seem to only enforce the rules and laws that benefit the university. Sorry, I really do not have any respect for an authority that so blatantly panders to its own needs.

Which brings me back to the ques-

tion of air in Central Square. Enforce the existing law. Stop dancing around the issue. If the university will not or cannot stop smokers, will the university stop me if I decide to enjoy a cool beer in Central Square? Unlike the smokers, I promise not to spray people walking by with second-hand beer and I will not leave bottles or cans lying around.

Think about it.

M. Wensloy

Misunderstanding clarified

To the editor,

I was disturbed and angered by both Roslyn Herst's "Strict procedures necessary" letter in the March 6 issue and Steve Cooney's response to it, "Defense of screening 'vague'" in the March 18 issue.

Firstly, the Red Cross process of discrimination is reprehensible, as stated in Cooney's letter. Herst is obviously misguided and in need of serious educational adjustment. I have to believe this is true because an informed opinion would not produce such a discriminatory hypothesis. Face it, Dr. Herst, such a view is insulting to all homosexuals and

AIDS.

Secondly, all persons with AIDS are "innocent," Mr. Cooney. Whether it's transmission of HIV through sex or through the reception of blood, the end result is the same. All persons with AIDS deserve and need all the support we can offer. While I suspect this was an oversight (the balance of your letter represents a high awareness of the issue), my point cannot be overstressed.

In the future, be careful what you write. You can't clear up misunderstanding by perpetuating new ones.

Ron Kelly
AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power
(ACT UP) Toronto



An open letter to Bill Farr from York Federation of Students

To the editor,

The following is a letter to Vice-President (Finance and Administration) Bill Farr.

On behalf of the York Federation of Students, I am writing to express our opposition to the proposed hikes in parking fees being forwarded by the Presidential Advisory Committee on Parking (PACOP).

This year, when the fee for unreserved decal yearly parking was increased by \$25 to \$105 per year — a whopping 31 per cent hike — you promised that it would be a "one-time only" hike of such magnitude. We were told that last year's increase was necessary to pay for the costs from the construction of new parking lots, etc. Now we are presented with a further \$15 (14.3 per cent) increase for next year. While the PACOP recommendations have been amended downward by \$5 for unreserved decal parking (due to our vociferous objections at the Committee level), and consideration of increases for future years have been put on hold, we still find these proposed parking fee hikes to be unacceptable.



Any increase in parking fees will only add to the growing financial burden being placed on students by the university administration. Students are already being asked to endure an eight per cent hike in tuition fees and residence rent increases of between 6.5 and 16 per cent in the coming year (not to mention textbooks, GST, etc.). There seems to be no recognition on the part of Committee members that students who attend York University are living in the 'most expensive city in North America.' The inflation rate for Toronto has run between six and seven per cent each of the last two years.

The size of last year's increase and these proposed hikes only serve to adversely affect accessibility for students to York, particularly those

who must drive to school because adequate public transit is unavailable to them. While we are conscious of the environmental costs of unchecked auto emissions, the university (administration) must ensure that a post-secondary education is accessible to all students. Those students who have to drive here should not have to face an extra financial burden simply to attend this university.

According to the Committee, the parking fee hikes are designed to raise revenues to support 50 per cent of security operations and 100 per cent of student security operations, which is on top of supporting the parking service. Students — those who are least able to afford it — should not be taxed to provide for such basic services as public safety

(increased provincial/federal government funding and wiser distribution of the financial resources already available to the university are the primary answers to this problem). The Committee is also asking students who purchase unreserved decals to pay for the capital construction of reserved parking lots and service lots such as the one to be built for the YorkLanes complex.

We also reject the comparisons the Committee makes between parking fees at York and the rates at other post-secondary institutions across the province. The figures are not placed in any context and, as such, are virtually meaningless. There are clear socio-economic and geographical differences between students attending Queen's University and those attending our uni-

versity. More York students are commuters, more are from middle- and low-income families and the cost of living in Toronto is much greater than that of Kingston.

Furthermore, the figures the Committee uses for comparison are the high end of the rate scale, i.e. the fees paid by faculty and staff. For example, the \$216 yearly rate for McMaster University is the unreserved staff/faculty/graduate fee while the undergraduate student rate is \$11 per month — which actually works out to be less than the York rate over the school term. At least at McMaster there is consideration of ability to pay when setting parking rates.

We urge you and the Board of Governors to reject these unfair hikes. We hope, in turn, that you advise the Committee to begin addressing alternative methods of raising revenue without denying the opportunity of higher education for York students who have no choice but to drive.

Thanking you in advance for your consideration.

Jean Ghomeshi,
President, YFS