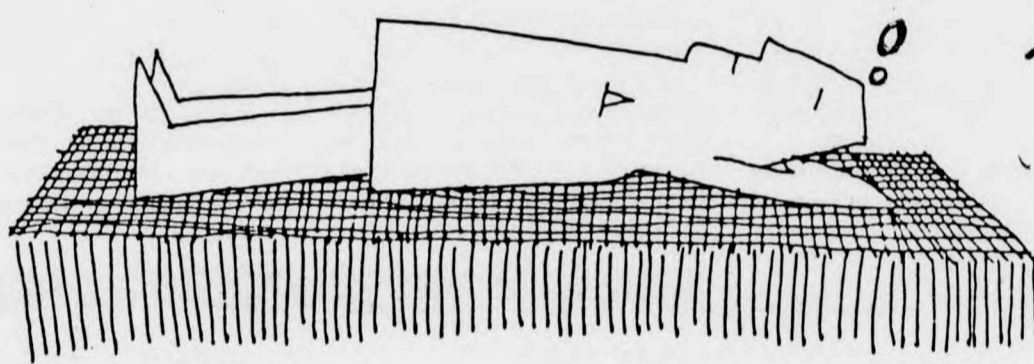


editorial



If you can't beat 'em, join 'em

It happens every year. Somebody from the Jewish Students Federation or the York Arab Students Association writes a letter to *Excalibur* about the Middle East. Somebody from the other group takes offence, and writes an angry letter in response. The rhetoric escalates to the point where somebody feels the other side has stepped outside the boundaries of reasonable debate.

And the newspaper is blamed.

Student newspapers are owned by the students at their institution, and run primarily, if not exclusively, by students and former students. Their main purpose is to communicate the concerns of students; this should be reflected in what the students choose to write about.

This is a challenge at York, which is the most ethnically diverse campus in Canada. How best to represent all of the different communities and interests? Most people who work at *Excalibur* (including me) believe that the newspaper should accept any piece of writing from any group, as long as it conforms to acceptable standards.

Ahh, but there's the rub. There is a clear division at the newspaper as to what constitutes acceptable standards. *Excalibur* will not publish anything racist, sexist, homophobic and/or libellous, and it will not run stories which are poorly written. Although the belief in these criteria are shared by all members of staff, some believe the newspaper has obligations in addition to them.

I, for instance, see no advantage to allowing groups to vent their hostility at one another through the pages of the newspaper, as has recently happened. I like to think that *Excalibur* can

be a bridge between York's ethnic communities, giving them a chance to talk to one another, to celebrate each other's joys, to commiserate with each other in sorrow. While the newspaper isn't likely to be able to bring Arabs and Jews together, I believe it shouldn't be used to further divide them.

It was argued that this is somehow an abridgement of free speech. Pernicious nonsense. Most groups on campus have their own methods of disseminating opinions; they don't need *Excalibur* to exercise their right to express hatred for each other. Neither is this a form of self-censorship, unless one is prepared to argue that any editorial judgment is a form of censorship, an extreme, and totally impractical, point of view.

Who has the right to judge what is fair comment and what is unacceptable? The editors are elected by the staff each year; part of the basis on which they are judged is the ability to make decisions about what goes into the paper. But, the ultimate decision rests with the staff, which is responsible for determining editorial policy (anybody at York can become a staff member by contributing to three issues of *Excalibur*).

This year's staff is fairly evenly divided between people who believe in printing anything that isn't racist, sexist, homophobic or libellous and those who want a more rigorous standard. Thus, what appears in the paper may seem a little contradictory; these are difficult enough questions for professionals, let alone a mostly volunteer staff.

If you don't like what you read in the newspaper, don't start demanding space. Don't put up posters threatening the editor. We're your newspaper — join us.

IN

excalibur

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Excalibur is a volunteer organization. We will consider for publication all submissions that are not deemed libellous or discriminatory by the editors and staff. The opinions expressed are not necessarily shared by all members of the staff or board of publications. Final responsibility resides with the editor-in-chief as outlined in the constitution.

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Production Manager Stephen Perry
Production Assistant Pat Micelli
Distribution Manager Riccardo Sala
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 (the "F" is for forfeit)
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Bisexual Womyn and Lesbian Issues Coordinator
 Frances Limfat

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Chair, Board of Publications Nancy Phillips

EXCALENDAR

Wednesday February 26

General Staff Meeting at 4:00 pm
 (All are welcome)

Thursday February 27

Editorial Board Meeting at 2:00 pm
Black Writers Caucus at 3:00 pm
Open Forum at 4:00 pm
 (313 Student Centre)

Monday March 2

Women's Caucus at 5:00 pm
Advanced Newswriters Workshop at 5:30 pm with
Big Clive Thompson

Wednesday March 4

Introduction to Newswriters Workshop at 5:00 pm with Big Chris and Big Jay and Big Jen

Wednesday March 11

Freedom of the Press at 4:30 pm with Big Chet Singh, Director of Race and Ethnic Relations

"If a man tells you he doesn't want to use a condom, tell him to use his hands."

— Montreal Safe Sex Ad