

# EDITORIAL

## Giving identity to the York campus

The date: Tuesday, October 25.

The event: The release of York President Harry Arthurs' White Paper.

The significance: The unprecedented reform paper will forever change the face of this university. Student government will never be the same.

The problem: Most York students are not even aware of the major significance of this event, and worse yet, they couldn't care less.

And this is precisely the reason why President Arthurs initiated his exhaustive campaign to revamp the structure of student government three years ago. The impetus for reform was straightforward: student government and the college system have failed to get the majority of students involved.

And the biggest losers have been the commuter students. According to a 1987 survey, about 80 per cent of commuter students did not take part in any college activity. Resident student apathy was not much better at 45 per cent.

Arthurs started off with a simple premise: in order to get people to care about colleges and student government, they have to start identifying with them. Ask anybody around Central Square and most will probably hesitate in naming their own colleges, if they can name any college at all. Is there really a difference between Founders and Vanier? That was the first problem with the colleges: how could students identify with them when the colleges themselves had such ambiguous identities?

So Arthurs proposed to give each college a unique theme, and marry them to individual faculties. It was a logical move. As Professor Ross Rudolph pointed out, most York students identify with their major, not their college. Yet the colleges have the organizational structure necessary to implement programmes. What they lacked was people; it was a perfect match.

Think about it: with the marriage of Fine Arts with Winters College, York students will be able to distinguish the college, and the Council will be able to run programmes that complement its membership.

An ineffectual central student government also hampered the system. Central student government was somewhat of a myth: a number of undergraduate students did not even belong to CYSF, simply because their colleges were not members.

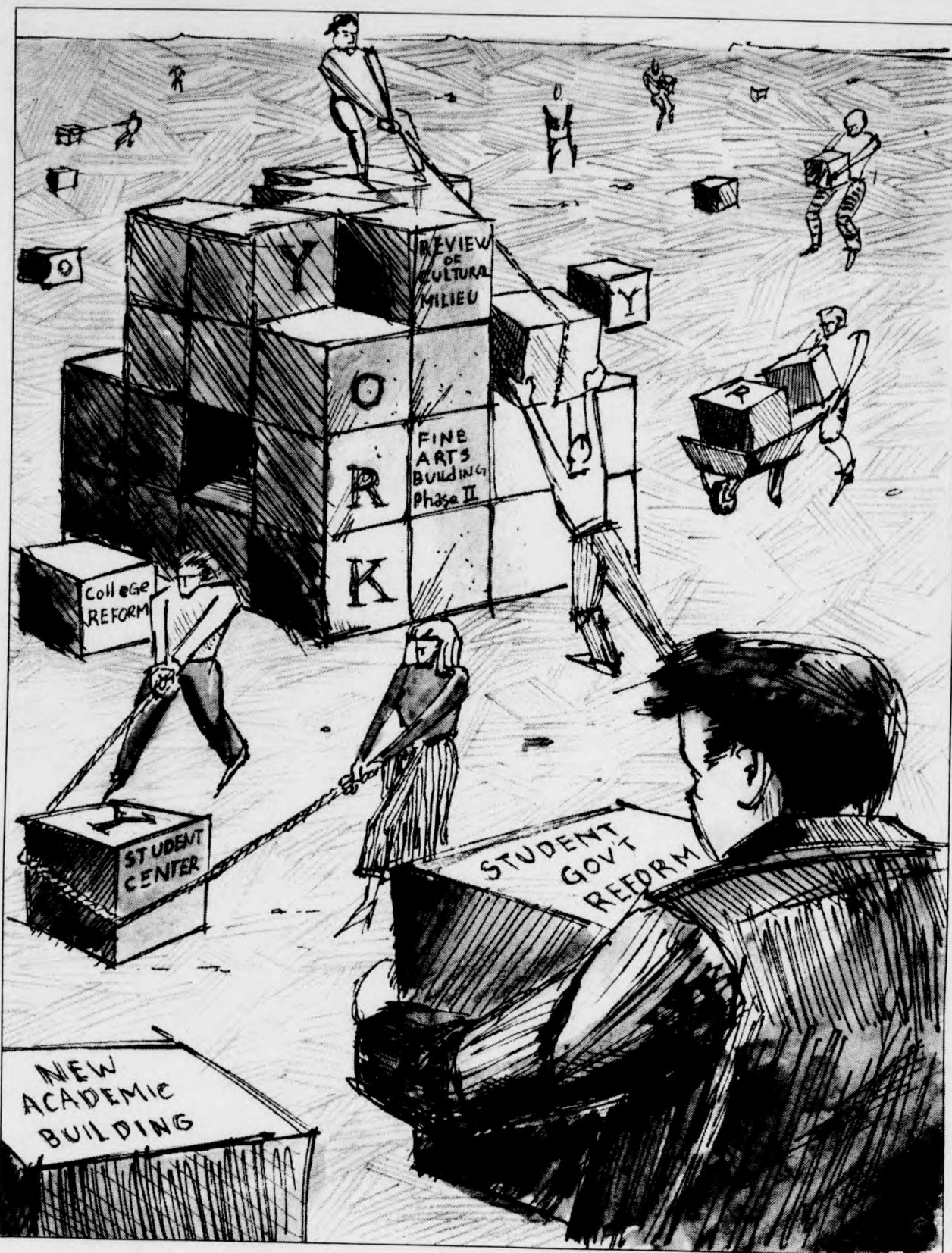
Finally, York University will have a central student voice. Starting this year, every undergraduate will be a member of either the CYSF or, in the case of graduate students, the GSA (Graduate Student Association).

What the new system has, which the old system sorely lacked, is a philosophy. It centralizes the system, then gives identities to the involved students.

But will that philosophy work? Will York students suddenly flock to college activities next fall? Probably not. In fact, a lot won't change on York campus for some time — not until many other initiatives are complete.

The success of Arthurs' White Paper rides on so many of the projects around campus: the Student Centre, the new residences, the entire development plan. To focus on the White Paper alone would be to misunderstand its entire outlook. An ambitious plan like this could never realize its goals unless it was complemented with such a comprehensive development plan. York has to boast the facilities on campus before it can keep the thousands of commuter students from going home.

Look around. While people are battling their way through the construction around campus, they are hardly aware of the internal reforms going on in their institution. In five years we won't even be able to recognize this university. Because of the White Paper, student government will bring meaning to these new facilities by providing students with attractive options and encouraging them to get involved.



We will publish, space permitting, letters under 250 words. They must be typed, triple-spaced, accompanied by writer's name and phone number. We may edit for length. Libellous material will be rejected. Deliver to 111 Central Square during business hours.

## LETTERS

### Tight buns, and a bulge

Dear Editor,

In response to the item "Assault in York Lot" (*Excalibur*, Nov. 17) about the 19-year-old male who was sexually assaulted by three women. Come on, this guy was just "asking for it" — out alone in the evening. He knew what to expect. And the "way he was dressed" — he just "provoked" and "enticed" those women . . . tight buns and a bulging basket. Probably had a few drinks at the pub before going out too. "Good boys" don't act and dress that way. He sounds like a "tease." Anyway, he probably "enjoyed" it. No big deal. Is it?

Turning the tables,  
Bruce Eakin

### Misusing the US flag

A campus group calling itself the Liberty Coalition displays the American flag at its table in Central Square. When asked, a

member of the group explained that they show the flag as a symbol of capitalism and freedom. As an American citizen I object to their use of my country's flag. First of all, the flag is a symbol of the United States and not of libertarian capitalism. The Liberty Coalition has no right to appropriate the national emblem of another country for its own use.

The student I spoke with believes with Milton Friedman that freedom and capitalism are synonymous and that America represents both. I think him profoundly mistaken on two counts. First, the relationship between capitalism and freedom is not so clear-cut as Friedman and other libertarian capitalists make out. Free to choose, we might opt for some alternative economic system. But where capitalism is strongly entrenched, as it is in the contemporary United States, do we really have that choice? There are also problems concerning the nature of our freedom under conditions of inequality engendered by capitalism to consider; however, I will leave these aside.

My second disagreement with the Liberty Coalition representative is over the symbolic importance of America and its flag. Contrary to his interpretation, I maintain that the

United States does not elevate capitalism to the level of a political first principle. I concede that the United States is a capitalist nation. I deny, however, that it *must* be. The US constitution, which does speak of liberty, contains no mention of capitalism (or any other economic system). I submit that the liberty-rights provided for by the constitution are wholly compatible with any number of economic arrangements that depart from laissez faire. While this does not embrace all conceivable alternatives, I think it would include democratic socialism.

In the future, if the Liberty Coalition wants to display a flag at its table, I suggest it design one of its own.

Stephen L. Newman  
Associate Professor  
Department of Political Science

### A vulgar sex organ

Dear Editor,  
For the past two Thursdays, my lunch hour in Central Square has been interrupted by the most pitiable

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