

NEWS

Custom essay service off the hook

by Brent Poland

Charges have been dropped against an essay service which provided what it called "research material" for students across the country.

The dismissal frustrated university administrators' hopes of setting a precedent against ready-made essay services.

Last Tuesday, in a precedent setting case, a preliminary court judge dismissed fraud charges against the owners of the Custom Essay Service because of lack of evidence.

Shirley Katz, the associate dean of arts who deals with academic offences, expressed disappointment at the dismissal of charges, but said the academic rules would not change.

"Students should not think just because there are not criminal repercussions for submitting an essay written by a commercial research company, that there will

be no academic penalties."

The charges were laid in response to pressure by York administration and the Council of Ontario Universities (COU).

A representative from the COU was not available for comment on the dismissal of the charges.

The service's owner was pleased with the decision.

"The judge in his wisdom has told us that freelance research is no more illegal than writing politicians' speeches," said Derek Sim, owner of the 10-year old Collier Street firm.

The Metro fraud squad had previously investigated the firm but never laid charges.

"The decision for an appeal is now in the hands of the crown," said York's legal counsel Harriet Lewis.

Lewis would not say whether there would be any pressure from York for an appeal.

On May 29, 1989, charges of conspiracy to utter a forged doc-

ument and seven counts of uttering a forged document were laid against Sim and his wife Elizabeth.

Each count carried a maximum penalty of ten years in prison.

Administration and the COU approached Metro 31 division when it became apparent that some students were submitting essays believed to be written by the essay service.

Police raided the service and confiscated its client file. Police apparently gave various Ontario universities access to the files.

Many administrations, including those at York and UofT, held back thousands of essays in spring 1989 to investigate students found in the client file.

Barry Fox, the lawyer representing the Sims, blasted the universities, saying that it was completely inappropriate to bring the matter to the courts.

Fox felt that if Sim was charged with uttering a forged document, then students using the service should have been charged with forgery. Fox likened the incident to that of a murder trial.

"If you are going to charge a person who loaded the murder weapon with accessory to murder then you have to charge the person who pulled the trigger."

Last year, a number of students were asked to come before academic committees to answer charges of academic dishonesty, relating to the Custom Essay Service.

In the faculty of arts alone a total of 75 students were reprimanded. The penalties ranged from a failure on the part of the course which was related to the offence to a 10-year suspension from the university system in Ontario.



One small crack in the armoured fortress that is York Inc.

Student Centre delay raises ethical problems

by Patrick Follens

The York Student Centre is currently 11 months behind schedule and \$5 million over budget.

An open forum was held on September 26 in the Ross Senate Chambers to address the reasons for this delay and the financial and ethical problems that have arisen as a result.

The major ethical dilemma concerned a recent decision made at the executive level of the Student Centre Corporation (SCC) not to refund any previously collected levies to students who had paid, but graduated before the facilities were completed.

According to Rob Castle, Gen-

eral Manager of the SCC, the Student Centre is expected to be completed in late January 1991, rather than the projected date of March 1, 1990.

Reasons for the delay include refinement of the Student Centre's design to suit the university's master architectural plan, the subsequent tender reviews, and a strike in the construction trades from May to July of 1990.

As a result of these complications, some of the students who paid the \$9/course levy (passed by referendum in March 1987) will have graduated before the Student Centre is opened.

"It remains an ethical question

cont'd on page 8

Gay rights coalition formed

by Dan Mahoney

A new coalition has been formed to represent lesbian and gay University groups in Ontario.

The group will lobby the Ontario Federation of Students (OFS) to promote gay rights at the university level.

The issues the coalition intends to pursue include gaining funding for their respective clubs, achieving recognition in the community, and including lesbian and gay issues in the university curricula.

The University coalition came out of a September 28 meeting of the Coalition for Lesbian and Gay Rights in Ontario (CLGRO) at Queen's University. York sent two representatives to the meeting from the Lesbian and Gay Alliance at York (LGAY).

The CLGRO which represents lesbian and gay issues across Ontario, discussed a wide range of topics at the meeting, including same sex spousal benefits, education and heterosexism, amnesty for lesbians and gays, national coming-out day, as well as the effects of the GST on the Coalition.

The next meeting of the coalition of Universities will be held at York from November 30 to December 2.



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