

# The nasty side of W.P. Kinsella

Renowned novelist bats around some favorite targets • Arts, page 15

## excalibur

Board of Governors block democracy

### New rule restricts student referenda

by Michael Horowitz

Recent changes to York's referendum process are threatening democratic decision making for students.

Until now, a referendum held by a student group was not considered valid unless at least 10 per cent of full-time students cast ballots.

Under the new guidelines set by the Board of Referendum Commissioners (BORC), this has been raised to 20 per cent.

According to Nikki Gershbnain, internal vice president of the York Federation of Students, by raising the quorum BORC has made it impossible to pass a referendum.

"The system has been paralysed completely."

Student groups use referenda to ask students if they will pay extra fees with their tuition for proposed programs and services. Recent examples at York include the Student Centre, the YFS health insurance plan and the \$4.00 per student collected by *Excalibur*.

"The implications for the democratic process at York are devastating," Gershbnain added.

Beth Hopkins, university Provost and a member of BORC, said she felt the previous 10 per cent quorum was not a large enough proportion of the student body.

"We are trying to be fair to all students," said Hopkins.

The change is the result of a complaint by a student about the nature of the referendum procedure.

Last year Andrea Shettleworth opposed the results of a referendum which led York to join both the Ontario and Canadian Federation of Students. Shettleworth complained to the York Board of Governors that the guidelines for referenda were undemocratic because only a small percentage of students voted.

At the Governors' request, BORC created a task force to examine complaints by Shettleworth and other students. The task force introduced the 20 per cent requirement early this month.

Because of these new guidelines, the YFS may have to scrap plans to hold a new referendum over their student health insurance plan.

In 1989, York students voted in a referendum to adopt the current Blue Cross health plan. Because of rising costs, a vote must be held this year on a new plan with a higher fee.

YFS members said they have not decided whether to attempt a November referendum or scrap the plan.

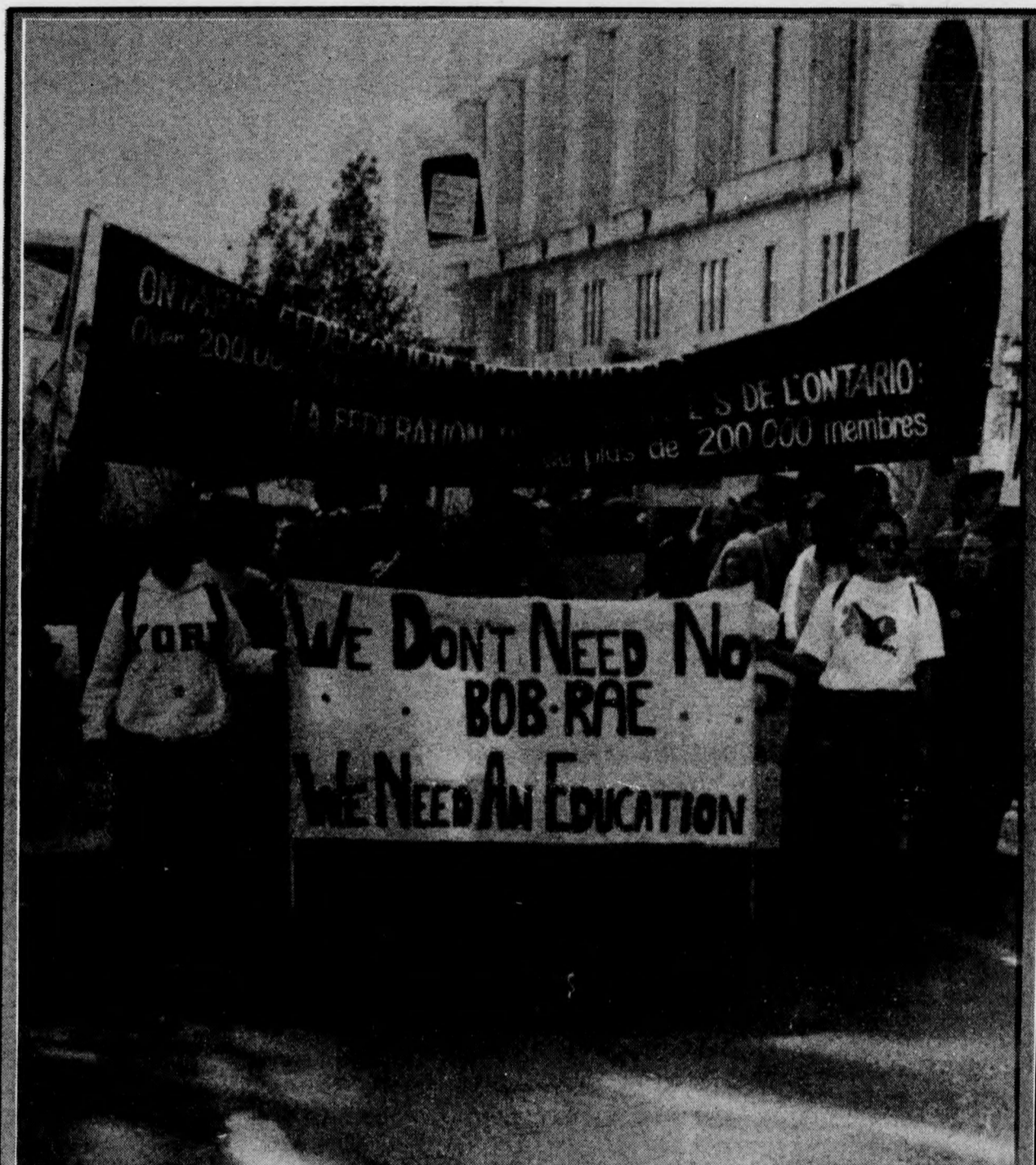
"Twenty percent is impossible," said YFS President Michelle Hughes, noting that this would require a voter turnout of more than 4,000 students, almost twice the current record.

Debbie Glass, director of York's Office of Student Affairs, said she disagrees.

"If a group of students are willing to work hard enough I think (the 20 per cent quorum) is achievable."

But Brad Abrams, Chair of BORC and YFS representative from Winters College, admitted that the 20 per cent quorum is "next to impossible."

"The entire referendum process needs to be reassessed," Abrams added. "Something has to change somewhere."



Alok Sharma

### Marching students storm Queen's Park

It wasn't big but it made a lot of noise. A thousand students storm Yonge street last Thursday as part of a National Student Day protest against education funding cuts and possible tuition hikes from the Ontario government. The students converged on Queen's park to vent their spleens and

chuck pasta at Minister of Colleges & Universities Richard Allen. Allen couldn't get a single word past the screaming students. On a more disappointing note, only 200 students made it to a Parliament Hill demo in Ottawa. Maybe they were too busy earning their tuition.

### York security in the dark about new program

by Sheena Jarvis

A police program to help security staff work with sexual assault survivors is getting raves on other Toronto campuses — but York Security says they don't know anything about it.

"As far as I'm concerned, every campus should jump at the chance to get involved [with the training program]," said John Mihalic, program coordinator for campus safety and security at Ryerson.

The Metro Police sexual assault squad program, an initiative of Metro Police Detective Wendy Leaver and Inspector Joe Wolfe, is designed to

train security officers in victim sensitivity, which helps provide the best possible care for victims of sexual assault.

Leaver said she contacted the University of Toronto, Ryerson and York University about the program in the spring of 1990.

"We've formed a very good relationship with U of T," she said, adding that Ryerson is also working closely with the program.

But York stumbled at the opportunity.

"York did not respond, they just didn't bother" Leaver said.

Joanne Bailey, administrative assistant for York Security, said Ex-

ecutive Security Director Pamela MacDonald told her York had not been contacted by the sexual assault squad.

"We know nothing, we have not been approached by Metro Toronto Police," Bailey said. "We haven't been contacted by the sexual assault squad."

So far, the program has been successful for U of T and Ryerson, administrators say.

"Having a department within the police force who are trained and focused on sexual assault victims has been a novel experience," said Patty

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