

# T. O. film-maker confronts death

By Elliott Lefko

Just how should one deal with death? Since everyone comes in contact, at one time or another, with people who are dying, the subject, although unpleasant, must be brought into the open to be talked about.

Dying with Dignity is the subject of a philosophy shared by many

doctors and practised in hospitals, such as Manitoba's St. Boniface Hospital. Recently a young Toronto film-maker, David Cherniack, veteran of a previous documentary on a hospital's burn ward, submerged himself into the daily lifestyle of the Palliative care unit of St. Boniface, to produce a film entitled, *Coming and Going*. For two weeks, Cherniack and his crew lived with the patients, dealing with their families and helped the staff. In order for him to fully become part of the unit he had to banish any feelings of pity or discomfort in being so near death.

"Death is an odd process", offers Duane Anderson of Harbinger. Anderson was a former co-director of the palliative care programme at a Montreal hospital. "It's painful for individuals, their families, and friends. The program *Dying with Dignity* helps people come out of their shells in talking to the dying. It's a perfect moment for people to express how deeply they feel about their close ones."

There are five recognized stages of death. 1) Denial 2) The search for other opinions 3) Depression 4) Suicidal 5) Acceptance and a final peace. Doctors recognize that the

terminally ill and their families are always on different stages of acceptance of death. Usually the family is one step behind. However in Palliative care units such as the one in *Coming and Going*, families are coached and patients go through therapy trying to coordinate their recognition of the death process.

The cultural background of an individual has a lot to do with the way an individual handles death. According to Duane Anderson, there is an eventfulness that goes on in an expanded family, eg. the Italian family and someone who is

dying; everybody comes out, sits around the deathbed, cheering and telling stories. However in North America, death is a cold process. Emotion is hidden, their is heavy social pressure of parents, children and friends.

Duane Anderson: "When someone dies, people cry. But who are you crying for, the deceased or yourself? Most people answer for themselves. They're sorry that they couldn't communicate before the person passed on, feeling regret because the person is no longer around."

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## way back

"We're all involved in politics, like it or not. We have no choice anymore... everyone is a politician."

Those were the words of a young "radical" alderman by the name of John Sewell quoted in a 1971 issue of Excalibur; a perfect summation of University life as it was seen that year by York's student journalists.

Here's a sample of headlines: "Students fight police" "Justice minister Turner heckled off stage" "The real politics of housework" "Police harass homosexuals" "U of T arts students vote to go on strike" "Left coup succeeds" "Bio-encounter: Stop pollution now"

Rallies, strikes, boycotts, potests. Everything from sex to shaving cream seemed politicized. Women arranged to protest a striptease contest at Founders College. Workers objected to high temperatures in the library and walked off the job. Osgoode students called a one day moratorium following the imposition of the War Measures Act. Concerns that are now part of our collective consciousness burst

forth in bold type on every page: multinationals, the women's movement, the Parti Quebecois, environmentalism.

The "sixties" had finally hit York, the campus that only a few years previous celebrated slave auctions, beauty pageants and debating teams.

The impact of Vietnam, probably the motional centre of sixties unrest, was more vicarious than real to most Canadians but the upheaval down south was well documented page by page: Richard Nixon, the California lettuce boycott, prison revolts in New York, the Kent State Massacre, Vietnam vets.

As Excalibur's news eye continually focussed across the border, York's paranoia over its American links was at an all time high. Student Mike Blumenthal disrupted a convocation ceremony by delivering a speech denouncing the US domination of York's board of governors. (The accompanying photo—York's chancellor Floyd Chalmers scowling at the obstreperous Blumenthal—is a classic sixties confrontation). During the same week, Pennsylvania asked York to comply with a state law demanding that-

files be kept on plitical activites of Pennsylvania students attending York.

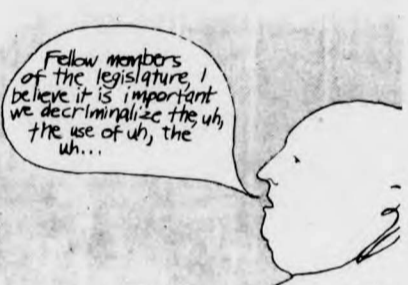
Excalibur editorial writers were vexed that many arts departments were "controlled by Americans and American-trained Canadians". Yet only a week earlier the editorialists attacked the government for denying landed immigrant status to an American member of the history department.

Farley Mowat strode into York and raised a clenched fist urging students to "throw off the yoke of US domination".

Hippie leader Abbie Hoffman shouted "Fuck Canada" to a group of Alberta students. "The whole world is at war with the USA. Canada is the only country in the world which has surrendered without a shot."

Hugh Westrup

## Cabinet can remove pot from code



OTTAWA (CUP) — Trudeau's cabinet could decriminalize marijuana tomorrow — if it wished. So says Andy Rapoch, executive director of the National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws (NORML).

Rapoch claims the cabinet could remove possession of pot from the Criminal Code by passing a simple

Order-in-Council that would not even need parliamentary debate. If it did so, he said, it would also stop "making criminals out of 40,000 people a year, for what is clearly not a crime."

Decriminalization is "an idea whose time has come" he added, calling on the government to transfer jurisdiction over cannabis from the Narcotics Control Act to the Food and Drug Act. This change would allow users to grow and possess small amounts of weed for their personal consumption.

In December, justice minister Marc Lalonde said he would consider loosening the current laws relating to marijuana. Rapoch challenged him to do so immediately, so that decriminalization would not become an issue in the upcoming election.

Meanwhile, Rapoch claimed there are 1500 Canadian members of NORML, along with 2.5 million supporters—his estimate of the number of Canadians who smoke dope.

## Omission

In last Thursday's issue, Andrew Cordozo's byline did not appear with his article "Northern conference probes native issues." On page eight of the same issue, Pam Mingo's credit did not appear with her cartoon illustrating the article "Nazis—free from prosecution?"

## The ongoing fight against illiteracy

SAN FRANCISCO (ZNS-CUP) — Here's an item from the department of bureaucratess: A research firm has told the State Board of Education in North Carolina that — in the firm's words — "the conceptual framework for this evaluation posits a set of determinants of implementation which explains variations in the level of implementation of the comprehensive project."

This sentence was contained in a report on how schools should try to combat illiteracy.

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