

PERSPECTIVE

BY ROBERT CASTLE

Law school students' gripes about York are unjustified

When I started at Osgoode in September I was startled to learn first-hand of the acute fear of many law students that someone might think they were part of York. No, I was assured, Osgoode is *not* the Faculty of Law at York. All York did was give us land. Oh? Osgoode has its own history, they told

me, its own traditions, and York, apparently lacking any of its own, threatens these. Really? Besides, York is a second rate university, undeserving of the obvious prestige associated with the only law school in the country that has its own name. How truly informative!

And, to top it off, I was told that if York reforms student government then the august Law Society of Upper Canada, already dissatisfied with the size of Osgoode and its diverse curricula, would consider that the last straw and take away our name. Zounds! But how wonderful that the Law Society is aware of student politics at York and that it even cares! One Osgoodeite even said that until he arrived here, he didn't know Osgoode was at York. How well informed!

Beyond the obvious xenophobia and misinformation, what disturbed me most was the fervour of these people. Life, it seemed, depended on convincing me the errors of my ways. Imagine, if you will, the audacity of someone attending York for four years and being proud of doing so? Well, to the chagrin of some of my new colleagues, I am.

These fears also ran rampant through the pages of Osgoode's paper, *Obiter Dicta*. Responding to the Gilmore Report's discussion paper, which recommended the creation of faculty student governments under one central undergrad government, the *Obiter* cried foul! The death of the Legal and Literary Society (Osgoode's student government) was now imminent. Once again York was displaying its chronic mistreatment of her adopted son.

What *Obiter* failed to realize was that Osgoode is not a college at York, but a faculty. If Gilmore recommended a decreased role for the colleges, it would not affect Osgoode the way it would Vanier or Founders. They claimed that "all student activities at Osgoode Hall will be coordinated, funded and organized by CYSF." Gilmore never made such an assertion. Indeed, as a faculty government, Legal and Lit would be funded directly by its members.

Words could not express my disbelief at the inability of law students to read a draft document and to understand what it meant. There was none of the cool analytical skill one would expect from Osgoode students. Instead we received pure, uninformed, emotional rhetoric.

I should point out that in second year history at York (of all places!) I learned to interpret constitutional documents of 16th century England. Surely we wouldn't be expecting too much of the writers of *Obiter* to learn how to analyze student government documents written in 1986 English.

Perhaps it would be worthwhile to pose a question to Osgoode students: Where would Osgoode be were it not for York? I was told by an influential Osgoodeite that instead of moving to York, Osgoode could have affiliated with any university, U of T, for example, or could have struck out on its own.

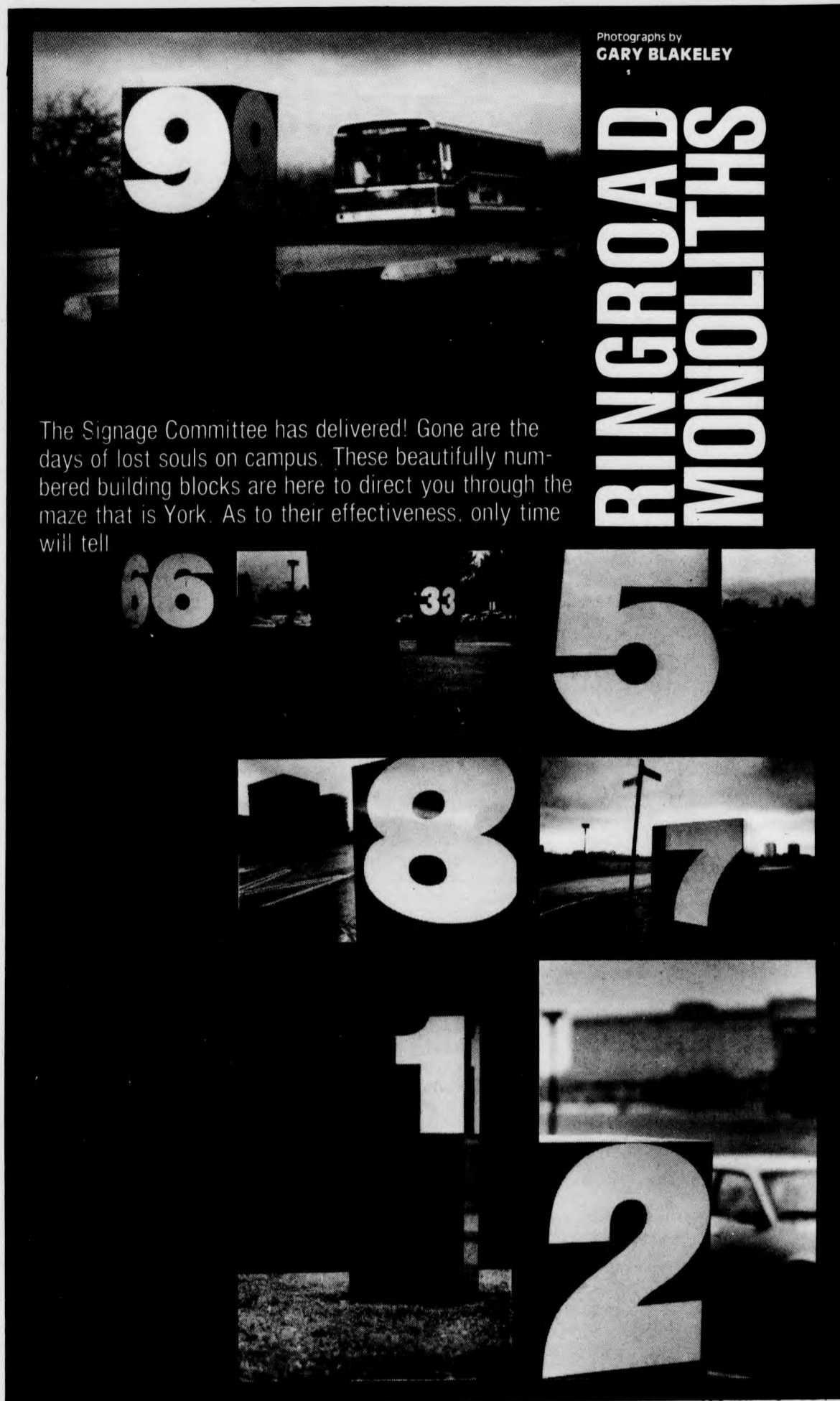
This deserves an emphatic, Oh really! Someone should have told him that by the mid-'60s Osgoode had caught up with mainstream law schools, was expanding and had outgrown its space at the real Osgoode Hall. Someone should also have told him that U of T demonstrated little interest. They already had their own law school, but thanks anyway. How informed he would have been if he only knew that Osgoode had realized the need to affiliate with a university both for its academic structure and for its money.

Despite his repugnance toward York, he should know that York was then and remains now academically vibrant. Osgoode saw a good thing and went for it. They got a new \$6-million building (1968 dollars), which is probably the finest law school building in Canada. Their library became the largest Common Law library in the commonwealth thanks, in part, to York's commitment to ensure *its* law school would be the finest in the land.

Also, Osgoode could only benefit from York's emphasis on interdisciplinary studies. Last year, for example, Osgoode established the Centre for Research on Public Law and Public Policy which will draw on many of the scholars at York as it examines the impact of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Both York and Osgoode benefit from their relationship. It's time Osgoode students realized that they *are* students at York and that York has done much to contribute to the high standards that Osgoode has achieved over the last 18 years at York.

□ Rob Castle, last year's CYSF Academic Affairs Director, is a first-year Osgoode student and a co-ordinator of the Student centre initiative.



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