

Federation Notes

TUITION FEES: CHAPTER 3

It has become apparent now that tuition fees for five full courses next year will be around \$910. For those of you living in residence, fees for a single room average about \$1115 an increase of six-and-one-half per cent over this year. Meanwhile, the cost of meals will increase about 6.3 per cent so script will cost around \$800 for next year. And for those of you who drive to school, parking costs went up 5 per cent to \$45.00 for the cheapest parking pass for 80-81. Books in the bookstore should increase about 15-20 per cent, depending on the shape of the Canadian dollar next fall. It would also appear that TTC rates will increase in the coming year as well.

The outcome of these increases will mean that a self-supporting student will have to save an extra \$250 this summer from their summer job. When Dr. Stephenson spoke at York a few weeks ago, she promised that weekly living allowances would be increased to keep up with the cost of inflation. Last Monday the announcement came through as follows:

1. OSAP increased overall by \$7.9 million
2. Living allowances increased from \$65-\$72 weekly
3. No change in grant ceiling
4. No change in parental income table

This announcement has some welcome changes. OSAP has been increased \$11 million overall to accommodate the tuition increases across the province while the 75,000 students presently on OSAP will enjoy. Unfortunately, the grant ceiling was not changed at the same time, so people who need financial assistance the most will not be able to get much more money.

At the same time, raising the weekly living allowance is beneficial for most students, but if we go half-way to the poverty line it would be better. \$72 weekly provides roughly \$2300 for the academic year. Room and meals will cost roughly \$2000 and that leaves roughly \$300 over eight months or about \$9.00 a week to live on. Good luck if you can do it!

The second disturbing part of the announcement centred around the parental income table. At the present time, in certain situations, parents whose combined income is above \$7100 could be responsible for providing support for their child's university or college education. Could you imagine a family of three living on \$7100 per annum, and then contribute to a university education.

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COUNCIL ACTIVITY

During the last month of office, Council will basically be putting the final touches on the year's projects and tying up any loose ends. The next meeting of Council is Thursday, April 10th at 6:30 p.m. in the Senate Chamber S915 Ross Building. Any group still requesting funding should contact me at least a few days before the meeting.

Finally, the Lyceum Used Bookstore, operated by the Federation, will be offering a Book Buy Back the last two weeks of April. Come in and check out the operation because it offers a good deal for students. Good luck on your exams and essays.

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Gen Ed:

"A cancer on the university"?

Hugh Westrup

Grade 14. That's how students refer to what is known in the more polite language of officialese as York's General Education program. It captures the feeling of disappointment among those who anticipate the freedom to choose or specialize at university and are frustrated by yet more mandatory course schedules. For many, it's like high school—you endure it only because you know it will end.

"It's a waste of time," says first-year theatre student Sonia Voltan, referring to the demand that she must take Social Science, Humanities and Natural Science course plus a college tutorial. "They have nothing to do with my major."

This view is one facet of a debate that has gone on for as long as York has existed. As former president John Yolton remarked in reference to General Education, "Seldom has a curriculum been subject to so much self-criticism, discussion, debate and evaluation."

Though some are exasperated by the debate, it just won't die down. And it appears that another round of talks has begun following the recent publication of a white paper on academic policy in the Faculty of Arts.

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priori exclusion from debate of York's peculiar, problematical, compulsory system of general education by Divisional courses. We contend, and out student members were especially vociferous on this point, that the compulsory divisional courses remain one of the major stumbling blocks to genuine programme reform at York. They constitute a continuing major image problem for the University, reportedly sending good students in droves to other institutions which do not share this dogged and quaint commitment to an eccentric kind of 'general education'."

Why wasn't the central question regarding Gen Ed's existence answered? According to Professor Theodore Olson, who chaired the white paper committee, "people don't realize how often that question has been asked. The division shouldn't have to have it asked every 18 months." Olson points to a number of studies that have examined Gen Ed over the years.

For a political explanation, it is instructive to note that of the six members on the committee, three are fully or cross-appointed in one of Social Science or Humanities: William Westfall (Humanities), Cynthia Dent (History and Humanities) and Olson himself (Social Science). But Olson dismisses speculation about a biased committee as "ridiculous."

Nevertheless, the debate has resurfaced. What then are the major points of contention?

While there is general agreement that the aim of Gen Ed—a well-rounded education that familiarizes students with the approaches taken by various disciplines of study—is a noble one, there are different views as to how it can be attained.

Isaac Bar-Lewaw, Professor of Hispanic and Latin American Literature and long-time critic of university policy, disagrees with the idea of designing and managing compulsory courses. "I'm in favour of liberal education," says Bar-Lewaw, "but that can't be attained with 10-15 books in a few Gen Ed courses. It has to be encouraged in all courses. In my course on the 20th Century Spanish American Novel, for

example, I give them required reading, but I also urge them to study the history and geography of Latin America."

"Forcing students to take a few Gen Ed courses is like spoon-feeding and it just brings on unhappiness."

Geography Professor Don Freeman, who believes that Gen Ed is discouraging highly-motivated, well-prepared students who are ready to specialize, suggests that the Gen Ed courses need not be concentrated in the first year.

This is an idea also favoured by Arts Dean Harold Kaplan. He calls it "floating" which allows students to enrol in any Humanities or Social Science course—not just the introductory ones—at any time in their academic careers.

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Kaplan's idea is based on his observation of changes in high school curricula over the last decade. "In the early days, Gen Ed was created in response to rigid, narrow high school courses. It was a good means of shaking students up. But since then some of our ideas have filtered down to the high schools so that many students are prepared to specialize when they get here."

Kaplan is in favour of maximum choice and sees it as unfortunate that many students who are required to take 100 level Gen Ed courses don't get into the sections they would prefer. Why not make all courses available to mitigate this disappointment?

Another advocate of "floating" is History Chairman Paul Stevens who was one of the six members of the white paper committee. "Interdisciplinary work of the kind offered in Social Science and Humanities is better carried out at the upper levels, at the apex of a university career," says Stevens. "You

can't cross disciplines until you have a firm grounding in one area."

Stevens is also concerned about the quality of teaching in the first-year courses. "It is an enormous anomaly that one-half of the Gen Ed tutorials are taught by part-time teachers."

"Introductory interdisciplinary courses are complex programs yet the people teaching them are those least prepared to do it. It takes time for a teacher to learn the mechanics of crossing disciplines. You need experienced faculty to fill those positions."

Stevens says this problem is particularly real for the Social Science division. "In the beginning professors were cross-appointed between Humanities and other departments. But in the case of Social Science, professors were appointed to departments first and then pushed over to the Social Science division. There is less of a core of committed people."

"Departments feel that if they're going to teach in the first year, they want to teach in their own departments. You have to coerce people into teaching in Social Science and Humanities."

Professor Richard Goranson of the Department of Psychology sees the Gen Ed requirements as "a cancer on the university. Good students avoid York because of the Gen Ed."

Over the past year the psychology department has been investigating the

Essays for sale

Barb Mainguy

Is the old grid of essay writing getting you down? The idea of original thought limited to what to eat and wear? Besides, who cares about academic integrity anyway? After all, it's Spring.

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Mr. Sim runs the Custom Essay Service located across from the Varsity Stadium. It's listed in the Business Practices Act as a literary research service, and provides essays for paying customers. "Our customers can take our essays and do anything they like with them," says Sim. "But most of the time they hand them in as written. That's what they're paying for."

"Everybody," answers Sim. "All types. 'A' students, 'B' students, English-as-a-second-language students, night school students. There are a multitude of reasons—time, inability to handle course material, lack of interest in the subjects."

possibility of withdrawing from the Faculty of Arts to establish a separate faculty either by itself or with other departments. "The Gen Ed problem is one of the major reasons why I find this option attractive," says Goranson.

In spite of arguments like these, the white paper recommends that Gen Ed should remain a first year program. Speaking to Olson it becomes clear that the committee was concerned with course juggling and not major restructuring or elimination of the program. One of the concerns expressed by Olson is over the disappointment felt by students who don't get into the Gen Ed courses they want. Olson says the white paper's solution is to group courses together under fewer course headlines.

Some faculty members fear, however, that a grouping exercise will reduce some of the distinctive differences between courses and eliminate the more idiosyncratic ones. Says Philosophy Professor Michael Gilbert: "It merely trades off disappointment. If you cut down course selection, then you create another kind of disappointment by eliminating choice."

Many hoped that the white paper would delve deeper into the issue of general education. By stepping lightly over it, the committee may have inadvertently intensified the debate that is scheduled to last until September. The forecast is for a long, hot summer.

While Sim would not be specific about the number of students using his service, the field is apparently lucrative enough to support at least two established businesses employing full-time essay writers. For \$9 a page, you get a professional job, on a subject either selected from the catalogue provided, or tailor-made to your own specifications. The writers are usually university graduates, or people with a good knowledge in a specific area who are capable writers. In the words of John Snagg, a York Alum who now writes essays, "I never really liked school too much, there was no money in it. This seemed like a good way of learning and getting paid at the same time." Snagg receives \$3-4 a page from the essay service, which therefore reaps a profit of about \$5-6. That's about \$45 for a full essay.

Using the service is of course not without risk. Handing in a purchased or plagiarized paper at York could, if you were found out, bring the penalty of a 0 in the assignment, in the course, or in really severe cases, dismissal from the university.

John Willoughby, chairman of the English department at York, says he defied anybody to prove that a student has produced a purchased essay. "Some faculty members have bought the catalogues and ordered essays," he says. "But you would have to get the same essay to prove it, wouldn't you? I've never heard of a single instance that's been proven. It's hard enough to prove ordinary acts of plagiarism, let alone ones of this kind."

Professor Bar-Lewaw, from the Department of Linguistics at York, says he once confronted a student about the source of an essay. "It was several years ago. He produced an essay that was just too good to be true. When I questioned him, the man didn't have the slightest idea about what was in the paper. But he didn't have to do it. He could have produced an adequate paper by himself."

York has a policy making it illegal to advertise an essay writing service on campus, and the CYSF has mandates forbidding such advertisements appearing in any of their publications. But the only people who could stop the use of these services are the students. Some who have bought essays or plagiarized for reasons ranging from lack of time to sheer boredom with the course material, consider it an extremely useful service.

According to Chairman Willoughby, "any student who stoops to this kind of thing deserves whatever he gets." What if he gets an 'A'?

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Post-modernist debate

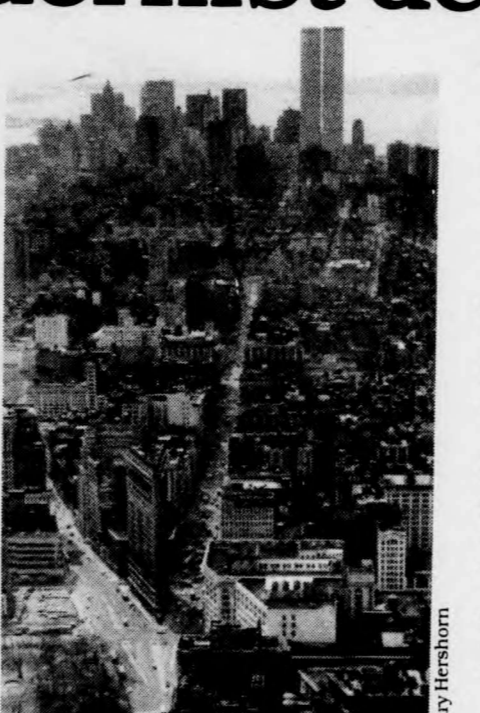
Lydia Pawlenko

We have created our own uptown, midtown, downtown and SoHo. Slipping out to Lichtman's for one's four-pound copy of the Sunday New York Times has become a weekly fix. Some of the more pretentiously casual cafes now promise a free serving of Bronx obnoxiousness with every order of the Coney Island platter. And steam tunnels promise to attract more avant-garde dwellers than lofts did.

As Torontonians' obsession with New York reaches epidemic proportions, it was indeed a relief that one expert from the "Big Apple" arrived discreetly at York last Thursday in a Rolls Royce Silver Cloud. It was none other than the distinguished painting and sculpture critic Clement Greenberg, here to accept his honours after donating four paintings by Jack Bush, which are to be sold to support a Jack Bush Scholarship Fund.

The capacity crowd that gathered for his lecture in a Fine Arts lecture hall, was able to get an impression of "Mr. Art" himself, whose crusades to the Toronto art scene during the fifties and sixties heightened the tension between New York's internationalism and Toronto's regionalism. But it was a glimpse of an art critic who was not prepared to spell out his secret modernist theory. A theory by which Greenberg knows what he likes, definitely.

The 71 year-old New Yorker who is the author of books on Miro and Matisse and of numerous critical essays for *The Nation*, *Partisan Review*, *Art News*, *Arts and Art Literature*, is enlisted in the high



Gony Hershman

and rigorous cause of Modern Art. His concern centres around somehow purifying art by reducing it to the rock-bottom essentials of colour and form, as well as having it embody a certain soulful extra that Greenberg finds hard to define.

He started off the afternoon pleasantly, by telling the audience that the best new painting has always been in the background and has always had to wait 10 to 15 years before it is recognized. "Just like in Manet's time."

According to Greenberg, since the

1960's, we have been under the widespread illusion that artists are no longer making the mistakes of the past. He claimed that art celebrities under the age of 45 of our time are no better than those of 1895 or 1945. "We are just as wrong about who the stellar artists are under the age of 45," he said. "The museums are just as wrong."

The best art comes from another direction, and in contemporary art it is hard to distinguish. "It comes in quietly. It no longer challenges your eye in a blatant way, in a spectacular way. Now it sneaks in."

Greenberg believes Modern Art is "as good as it ever was." It is the audience that is worse now. He pointed out the fact that Jackson Pollock's art was once regarded as a "freakish apparition." It was only after Pollock's death that "anything Pollockian became okay. The sad fact is that there are only five people in New York who can tell the difference between a good and a bad Pollock."

The best art made its appearance by shocking people, and what seemed to interest Greenberg was what he called a "tolerance of boredom" which has emerged since the sixties. He attacked the Director of the National Gallery in Washington and "female art critics" for being afraid to say that artist Frank Stella's "Birds" are awful. The art of Stella, one of the most influential artists around, incidentally, functioned as a major inspiration for Minimal Art. The artist had insisted that there were no humanistic values to be found in his paintings, his main interest being to make what is popularly called decorative

painting truly viable in abstract terms. And this idea does not, to say the least, settle well with Greenberg.

Which brought him to the problem of what comes after Modern Art. Greenberg's answer was simply Modern Art.

"Post-modernism doesn't mean anything in art," he said. "In architecture it means inferior architecture."

This sparked an emotional outburst from a man in the audience who thought Greenberg no longer had the right to retreat into outmoded forms of idealism, and a fiery battle of semantics began.

"You have defined formalism as..." said the challenger.

"Quote me!" snapped Greenberg. "In that publication you said that post-modernism did not..."

"Prove it!"

And so on and so forth.

To the absolute surprise of Greenberg, his mysterious opponent finally introduced himself as Jack Burnham. Also a well-known American art critic, Burnham has attacked Greenberg in his essays, which advocate new spiritual insights into the normality of materialism.

"You're really Jack Burnham?" asked a stunned Greenberg. "Well, I think we disagree."

And the two of them proceeded to ramble off in a cloud of nebulous polysyllabic verbiage, which left the audience in what can only be described as a perplexed state of ataxia. Did Jack say what Clement heard? Or did Clement say what Jack said? We'll never know.