

LETTERS

A NOTE OF PRAISE

As a devoted reader of York's community newspaper (with an admitted bias towards the issues of years past), I have to commend you on the fine newspaper you're turning out this year.

While some editors (whose names need not be mentioned) let their interest wane with the passing months of their tenure, you certainly have not. *Excalibur* looks better every week, surpassing the high standards it sets for Canadian student journalism on a regular basis.

The reporting is sharp and informative; the photography telling and artful; the layout design original and often breathtaking; the editorial writing profound and insightful.

I send my best to you and the fine team you lead. Many of this nation's so-called "professional" journalists would do well to follow your example.

Jonathan Mann
Quebec Press Gallery

EXAMINATION CONCERNS

Because some of my students justifiably complained about a heavy final exam schedule which involved my course, I have taken a closer look at this year's schedule and observed some unexpected features.

According to the 1981-82 Calendar, the final exam period is due to run from April 12 (Science) or April 19 (Arts, etc.) to May 7. We learn that there are more exams to be scheduled this year (*Excalibur* No. 25, p.3) yet, inexplicably, the timetable is such that only 2 exams are scheduled in the last week available. The crowding is made even worse because, of the total exams listed in the timetable, 12% are scheduled from April 12-16, 53% from 19-23, 35% from 26-30 and 0.04% from 3-7. Clearly compressing the timetable causes problems for students who end up with an unnecessarily heavy timetable during the all important final exam period.

Since the published exam period and convocation dates are essentially the same as last year and the University only has a modest (approximately 13%) increase in number of students this year, it is hard to understand why the processing of grades which could be accomplished last year cannot be handled in the same time period this year. I feel that the administrators who compiled this year's timetable (the Registrar's Office) should offer students and faculty an explanation for avoiding the last week and crowding so many exams into the first or second (depending on faculty) week of the exam period. It would also be nice to know why we need to spend \$50,000 for overtime wages (*Excalibur* 25, p. 3) when one presumes that last year, with exams running closer to convocation, the task could be completed without such expenditures.

I.B. Heath, Professor,
Department of Biology

DEFENCE OF A CRITIC

I am writing you with regards to the Cabaret *Upstaged* which I saw this past Saturday night in Mac Hall. For some reason, unknown to me, (because it had nothing to do with the show), Robyn Butt, your theatre critic, was the subject of the first song. Entitled "Bobyn Rutt", it unfolded into a barrage of insult upon Ms. Butt; as a critic as well as a person.

One accusation was a

complaint that Ms. Butt has never written a good review. First of all, one needs only the knowledge to be able to read to determine that this complaint is not justified. And secondly, even if Ms. Butt hadn't written a good review, so what? Could it possibly be that she never saw anything that was worthy, in her opinion, of a good review? Should the critic, be they theatre, music, art, or dance be required to write a percentage of their reviews as either 'raves' or 'pans'?

A second accusation levelled at Butt made the correct suggestion that she as a critic was trying to change the theatre in some way. I say this is a correct suggestion because this has been one of the major roles of the critic. The critic, if one takes time to investigate, is paramount in what the theatre does. Critical writings from Horace, Dryden, Tynan and Cohen, to name but a few, have changed the entire face of the theatre. I'm not suggesting that Ms. Butt will influence the theatre as much as the aforementioned, but the mandate of any critic is to respond to the theatre with reference to their own ideas and opinions. In this way the critic is capable of changing the theatre.

As far as I can see, Robyn Butt has a vision of what the theatre should be and she expresses it. Her reviews are reviews that can be discussed. Calling them 'non-reviews', 'garbage' or writing songs mocking her appearance, (as "Bobyn Rutt" did), shows immaturity and a lack of understanding of the role of the critic in the theatre.

One can certainly charge that some of Butt's criticisms are mere statements without justification. I was subjected to this myself when Butt referred to my direction of *Lovers and Other Strangers* during Project Week as "indecisive". But one must realize that newspapers, particularly one as small as *Excalibur*, are very limited in space, thereby prohibiting long and precise justifications of statements. The solution therefore, if one is outraged or confused by a review is to speak or write to the critic. I don't ever recall reading any letters in *Excalibur* to this regard. Instead what I do recall are countless slanderous statements about Ms. Butt's writings and opinions; statements which were totally unjustifiable. Then, to top it all off, I see an actress get up on stage with the support of a cast and York Cabaret to maliciously and mercilessly cut down not only the contribution of Ms. Butt to theatre at York, but her appearance as well. I was infuriated! I don't ask for censorship, just common sense.

To the person(s) responsible for the song "Bobyn Rutt" I say, know about that which you write. Furthermore, if you plan to have any future in theatre, learn a little about its history and the importance of the critic. In case you hadn't realized, without the critic you don't even exist.

Brian A. Scott
3rd Year Theatre

WINNING SPIRIT

In order to clarify any misrepresentations left by last week's editorial, "It's Time We Demanded First Class Sports and Entertainment", we would like to bring to light a couple of important points which may not have received due consideration.

Yes, it could be agreed that, at times, the players sent to the

National Championships are ill-prepared, but it is not any reflection on the players, coaching staff or athletic department directors. The root of the problem seems to lie more in the inherent lack of strong overall competition in various sport areas in Ontario. Thus, the transition to top flight national university competition is not an easy one.

Very few of the athletes consider the National Championships as a vacation. What would be the point, after having worked long and hard to be the best in Ontario not to want to make a good showing at the Canadians. Such a statement not only hits on the personal pride of the individual athlete but on the entire York athletic department.

A lack of winning tradition should not be misconstrued to mean the same thing as a lack of winning spirit. In addition to spending 20-30 hours each week in classes, the athletes must also devote many hours to perfecting their particular skills. Dedication such as this could not possibly exist if there was not an emphasis on succeeding to the highest attainable level.

Eight Ontario championships in a single year, not only a York record but also an Ontario record, shows evidence that a healthy winning tradition is rapidly being established at one of the youngest Canadian Universities. If that's not "first class sports", what is?

Petra Vander Ley
Laura Branchaud

DEAR 'YORKMAN'

I feel that I must dash off this short note to tell you of a strange attraction I have...I'm attracted to you.

When I first saw you in the *Excalibur* I was indifferent to your exploits, your "serious" problems and the other trials in your life. Then I started to weaken, I sympathized, even empathized (I'm an English major) with you. Now I'm hopelessly lost, yes Yorkman, I am actually quite fond of you.

You can carry my books any day. Perhaps I could even carry yours?

Karen Tiwana

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PUBLIC INFORMATION MEETING: 7:30 to 9:30 p.m. at 33 St. George Street, on Wednesday, April 14, Thursday, April 29th, or Tuesday, May 18th.