

Excalibur

Everything secret degenerates; nothing is safe that does not show it can bear discussion and publicity
—Lord Acton

Excalibur founded in 1966, is the York University weekly and is independent politically. Opinions expressed are the writer's and those unsigned are the responsibility of the editor. Excalibur is a member of Canadian University Press and attempts to be an agent of social change. Printed at Newsweb, Excalibur is published by Excalibur Publications.

News 667-3201

Advertising 667-3800

York's dilemma: a 4-way teeter-totter

This week, president Macdonald announced the establishment of a five-member university commission charged with the responsibility of formulating both long and middle-range "goals and objectives" for York.

High time.

Goals and objectives are not the sort of things we should leave to the last minute.

The future of York (and of all other universities in Ontario) will be an uneasy interplay of social, economic, administrative and academic considerations.

It's a four-way teeter-totter: it won't be smooth.

The new commission on goals and objectives will enable us to at least control the pain. And that's good.

One will note, however, that during the splendid 60s and the early 70s the need for such a commission at York was rarely mentioned. Mainly because of the bucks. Why worry about the role of the university or the quality of post-secondary school education when the jobs are secure?

Today, the bucks are dwindling and the jobs are getting shaky. So, it's time to forge ahead with academic planning, time to "recapture a sense of purpose." It's time to convince the public that our objectives "are worthy of its whole-hearted support and encouragement," as Macdonald puts it.

Agreed. Especially if, as Macdonald has indicated, the entire university community will be involved in this exploration of York's future.

We merely suggest that the exploration should have begun years ago.

No easy solutions

A long, long time ago, (last year actually), when the university food services committee was haggling over the posturing of the university's food service, and Excalibur (in the words of Globe and Mail writer Martin O'Malley) "ran a food story and/or editorial every second issue," we could always look forward to next year, when all that would be behind us.

Well, here we are. It's next year. And Excalibur is again publishing a food story and editorial every issue.

But not only Excalibur has gotten into the old act — CYSF president Dale Ritch is busily trying to arrange Rill Foods and Commercial Caterers a one-way ticket to the moon.

In effect, Dale Ritch has taken his head off the cutting block and is asking the students to back him up on a boycott of the Central Square coffee-shop. If students don't respond, there is nothing for Ritch and the ULC to do but scrap the plans and begin on a new strategy. If they do respond then Ritch will have his boycott, and there's not a man on campus better suited to the challenge.

We were gratified to see that Ritch has changed the issue from the plight of the laid-off Versa workers to a more general and philosophical

angle. And it is right to the point.

Should the university, whose understanding of students' needs ought to be somewhat more sensitive than that of an outside business, take it upon itself to operate food services?

The answer to this question is much more complicated than Ritch is willing to admit. If by such a move costs are reduced and quality is improved, then we would all welcome the change.

On the surface, at least, by eliminating the outside caterer's profit margin, prices could be reduced considerably. But, the university will find it much easier to let costs ride than would someone whose livelihood depended on reducing costs, especially if the excess costs were in the area of labour.

The university, of course, could always bury food service losses in increased residence fees or in academic areas, but you can be sure that students will pay for them.

Dale Ritch poses the question: who should run York's food services — the university, or private caterers?

It's an important issue.

But is a boycott the best way to present it?



"...and, what with budget cutbacks, enrolment drops and everybody getting unionized, we just decided to pack 'er in and run 'er as a farm..."



YORK YOU, BUDDY

The girls outnumbered the boys nearly five to one at the Scottish country dancing class in the Vanier dance studio on Tuesday evening.

But that was fine with us.

The class was the first of the season and the new instructor, Sandra Miller, was suitably nervous.

"Do you think many more will be coming?" she asked, as we reached deep into our pockets to pay our .50 (to cover the cost of refreshments). "I hope there's a good turn-out."

Mrs. Miller works in the department of student records here at York and, after 11 years in Canada, her voice still has Glasgow sparkle. She earned her teaching certificate in Scottish country dancing in Scotland during the summer.

At five minutes past eight, Mrs. Miller skipped to the centre of the floor and the class began. There were about sixteen of us, mostly young, mostly nervous.

Mrs. Miller's husband operated the tape-recorder. His name is Jack and he wore a kilt. We put our hands in our pockets, slouched a little and formed a circle on the floor.

The basic step in Scottish country dancing is a variation on the skipping-step we all did when we were kids. But it's not as simple as it looks; it's like a horse at a canter changing leads on every other stride.

"Very, very good!" laughed Mrs. Miller as we stumbled off in random directions. "You people will be teaching me before long!"

But there wasn't time to feel silly or embarrassed, for Mrs. Miller was leading us on to bigger things.

We learned to do "rights-and-lefts" and "polite turns" and "casting off" and something quite complicated called "down-the-middle".

The first complete dance we learned was a jig called "Highland Fair" and it was fun and we rested for a moment and then Mrs. Miller taught us to dance a "reel called the "Black dance" which we did all the way through twice, although we couldn't quite be sure because everyone but Mrs. Miller lost track.

And then Jack brought out pink lemonade and biscuits.

Mrs. Miller told us that Scottish country dancing isn't at all like Scottish folk dancing. Folk dancing was done mainly by peasants, but country dancing was the thing for everyone from shepherds to clan chiefs.

"The Queen is a patron of Scottish country dancing," she said.

Scottish country dancing is quite popular in Canada. The club in Toronto has almost 1,000 members. It's a very social dance.

One of the experienced dancers among us was a man named Frank Smith. He takes lessons at York on Tuesdays and at the North York library on Thursdays.

"It doesn't take long to catch on," he said. "Before you know it, you're whirling around without even thinking!"

Before we left, Mrs. Miller told us that next week we would learn to dance a "strathspey".

"Some people have 'our song'," she said. "But Jack and I have 'our dance', and that's the strathspey".

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