

OPINION

BA is meaningless

By J.W. BELTRAME

The Stong proposal for the creation of a new BA degree programme in which students would be responsible for subject of study, curriculum and grading system is the last logical reform in a series which have taken place in the Ontario education system at all levels.

Liberal educators have become convinced that education as it existed was at its best archaic and at its worst meaningless, and that reform was needed. But the problem arose when they stopped to consider what kind of changes should be implemented.

The Stong proposal is another blind effort to bring "meaning" into education, without an attempt to first define what is meant by a "meaningful education." In an age when some students are able to go through their undergraduate studies without having read more than a dozen books, it seems absurd to relax standards even more.

Where once the BA could be regarded as an accomplishment, today it is little more than an extension of secondary school education. The Stong programme, which would have students tackle practical problems, on the surface seems to be a way of linking the academic with the practical. In practice, however, it is more likely to lead to a further relaxation of standards in the guise of achieving a meaningful education.

While no one wants to return to the Oxford model of classics, English, history, mathematics, and religious studies, it makes even less sense to go off into unexplored areas for which no critical standards of judgment exist. The time has come for those who are responsible for education to shift their emphasis from introducing more quantity, to improving the quality of the teachers and curriculum offered.

The time has come for educators to abandon the questionable contention that a university education should meet the needs of every student who wishes to go beyond secondary school. The policy of providing something for everyone in the same programme has bankrupted the Bachelor of Arts programme.

This situation arose when governments in North America successfully brainwashed the people that anyone not entering a university would find it impossible to find any work. As standards were relaxed to avoid mass failures, educators searched for new subjects to keep students in universities. Since it is apparent that it is impossible to find work with a university degree, perhaps universities can concentrate on achieving a first rate system of education. Then, students will get full value for their high tuition fees.

OPINION

Smoke gets in your eyes

By SHELLEY RABINOVITCH

The odour of something burning wafts down the aisles of the lecture halls in Curtis and Stedman buildings. It is a pungent smell that irritates the nostrils of the non-smoker. Only then does awareness come — it is the ski jacket of the non-smoker that is slowly burning, not the cigarette of the individual who is puffing away like a chimney two tiers above.

Every lecture hall at York is technically a non-smoking room, but the professors usually choose to ignore the lit cancer sticks rather than make a fuss about them. How do you tell a 23-year old married man that he can't indulge in his favourite socially-accepted vice? He's been doing it since (as the song goes) high school, when he was 'smoking in the boy's room.'

Last year an internationally-known speaker (whose name I cannot recall at the moment) made a statement that went something like, "When Women's Lib wins its fight the next cause on the agenda will be Non-Smokers' Lib. That is also known as the fight to breathe the air you cannot see."

The smoker is generally typified as an incosiderate lout with a terminal hacking cough and smokers' breath. In some instances this is true, but usually the person with the Mothman's dangling from the lower lip is that good friend you just can't bear to insult by asking to put the dirty, evil thing out. So instead you turn blue, try to stuff your dangling tongue and bulging eyes back into your face, and grin and bear it. Greater love hath no sacrifice

Surely there must be some happy medium between the puffer and suff(er)er. Some lecturers ask smokers to confine themselves to the last three rows of the lecture hall, since some individuals are

allergic to the smoke. (Face it, there are people like that.) Others ask smokers to leave the halls when they "feel the urge", but then the students go running about, screaming infringement of human rights and prejudice.

Some non-smokers just get up and ask the individual to put the odiferous thing to death (an attitude that American commercials have been cultivating for quite some time with the "Yes I Mind If You Smoke" pieces). But this leads to friction between individuals and muttering behind people's backs.

Perhaps the most effective modus operandi is the old 'don't-let-me-upset-you-or-anything-but' approach. There's the "Don't let me upset you or anything but my jacket happens to be a blazing bonfire that rivals a can of Sterno" routine, and of course the infallible "Don't let me upset you or anything but I really don't think I need my hair dyed in 'Singed Cigarette.'"

The reaction is always one of apology, sometimes accompanied by an offer to pay for cleaning (or replacement.) In the future these individuals are quite considerate and often become friendly. What a way to make friends!

So the next time someone lights up a Du Snorier or a Flayer's cigarette, roll your eyes and choke politely to get the villain's attention. If they can see through the smoke (you may be lucky and get someone who blows smoke rings) they may even get the hint.

"Warning: The Department of National Health and Welfare advises that danger to health increases with amount smoked." Maybe the fire department should have that as their motto, too.

Letters To The Editor**Michael Mouritsen
maligned by article
on Bearpit session**

I have a number of complaints about last week's account of my recent appearance in Radio York's "under attack" programme in Central Square. Although the article reports many of the questions I was asked, it neglects most of my answers, and misquotes or misrepresents the few that were reported.

The article states I told the assembled students that I had asked President John Yolton to keep the library open "in the mornings and on Dec. 25 and 26" during the Christmas break. In fact, I asked Dr. Yolton to open the library (perhaps in the mornings only) on five days (Dec. 22, 23, 29, 31) in addition to the already-announced hours on Dec. 27 and 28. I did not ask that the library remain open on Dec. 25 and 26.

The article reports that, when asked where students would be left if my request for extended hours failed, I replied "Out in the cold." I did not say this, because I was not even asked this question. I was asked if I had any advice for students if my request was refused, and I simply answered that I had none.

The reporter reveals that "Mouritsen was next questioned about the (CYSF) budget, which he then proceeded to document. He said that the budget has already been published in Excalibur pages." I assume that by "document" the reporter means "explain." The second sentence, which I did not say, implies that my explanation of the budget consisted of referring students to the pages of Excalibur.

The article then states that I "met opposition from the crowd on the fact that only \$2,500 of the total \$95,000 was given back to students in the form of money given to student clubs." I'm not sure what the reporter would define as a "crowd", but I was questioned by exactly ten people during the entire one and one-half hours of the session. I met with opposition from most of these ten, a few of whom were more interested in making lengthy diatribes than in asking questions.

The reporter, apparently anxious to show his mastery of journalese, wrote that "when pressed", I stated that no club had appealed its grant. I said a great deal more than this, and I'm not sure that I was "pressed" into doing so. The statement "Mouritsen also commented on the fact that cultural groups such as the Black People's Movement had received grants that were too high" is a real gem. First, it is an "assertion" not a fact that the BPM grant is too

high, and second, what is the point in reporting that I commented on something while neglecting to print what I actually said?

The article concludes with the statement that "one final question" was raised. "The students were wondering how the council could entertain thoughts of closing down Excalibur (last summer) and how it could speak for students about NUS (National Union of Students) without first conducting an opinion poll."

The subjects of the proposed Excalibur suspension and NUS were neither a final nor a single question, but were raised a number of times during the session and were discussed at great length by myself. The reporter felt it unnecessary even to report that I "commented", let alone what I said.

MICHAEL MOURITSEN,
President,
York Student Federation

**All right out there,
who knocked over
Founder's snowgirl?**

This may appear to be a rather ridiculous request, but it is of importance to us. If at all possible, please print the following:

Why did you destroy our snowwoman in Founders Quad?

Robin Wylie
Allan Brenner
Lynne Hannach
John Bell
Cal Martin
Tom Eager
Candace Bullard

**Well girls, is this
an interesting campus
activity or isn't it?**

Following is an advertisement found on the seventh floor of Stong Residence - written, obviously, by a male:

Girls:

Are you having trouble with an abundance of script? Have no fear!! Take me to the BUTTERY!!! I will let you pay for everything plus ensure that you enjoy yourself to the fullest. I can carry a conversation for the shy type or play the role of a good listener. Basically, I am easy to get along with, and presently appointments are available most nights of the week. For appointments, phone 661-9258.

Since your newspaper covers all interesting campus activities, I thought that you would be interested in learning about it's existence!

Name withheld
by request

**Banfield's book is
useful teaching tool,
says tutorial prof**

By ironic coincidence, York SDS launched their "Ban Banfield" campaign on the very week that students read Banfield's *The Moral Basis of a Backward Society* as their assignment for the college tutorial I teach. Personally, I feel this book reveals Banfield to be ethnocentric, chauvinistic, and a very sloppy social scientist. For precisely these reasons, *The Moral Basis of a Backward Society* is an extremely provocative study and a very useful teaching tool.

Trying not to prestructure the students' reactions to the book with my own criticism, I normally just assign the readings and wait to see what the student response will be. The overall student reaction generally varies from serious scepticism to extreme outrage. The students are not "taken in" by the smooth-talking Banfield. On the contrary, as one student asserted, "As soon as I read the word 'backward' in the title, I knew something was wrong."

The Banfield exercise seems to provide good experience in the critical analysis of the assumptions, arguments and conclusions drawn by a supposedly competent, neutral and scholarly social scientist. The fact that Banfield's assumptions are very clearly culturally biased, his data scanty and his conclusions wrong only serves to highlight for the students the importance of

carefully examining what one is assigned to read.

What contempt SDS must have for their fellow students, that they think them incapable of learning to identify, criticize and reject ethnocentric or racial views, particularly when the chauvinism or racism is as blatant as Banfield's! What arrogance SDS displays in their belief that only they are capable of seeing through the arguments of an Edward Banfield, while other, less gifted minds must be protected from exposure to such dangerous views. The use of a book like *The Moral Basis of a Backward Society* does not "provide a platform for the promotion of racist theories," as SDS asserts. Rather, it provides an opportunity for people to learn how such theories are constructed and how they can be most effectively refuted.

JUDITH ADLER HELLMAN
Social Science Division

**Tyranny of the snob
manifests itself in
the bookstore report**

"The tyranny of the snob" has manifested itself at York in the form of G.F. Reed's elitist blemish of a Senate bookstore report.

As a York student, I am neither interested in nor tolerant of any attempts to give the store "a more serious air"; I'm not interested in "airs" at all. Shall we eliminate anything and everything except the safe, reliable Thackeray and Jane Austen? Remember, we'll have to get rid of all seemingly "frivolous" trash — from early Scott Fitzgerald to Cervantes to Cosgrave to Chaucer (who, in addition, used the word "fart"; what are we running, a Yonge St. porno shop?)

It must be fun to declare, as Mr. Reed does, that his own standard of taste will determine the marketability of literature. And it must be fun to denounce an establishment at a meeting where no bookstore rep could offer a defence. Let us all applaud this report's courage, liberalism and championing of individual freedom!

PAUL TRUSTER

The outside world

We would like to compliment Excalibur for the Dec. 6 cartoon which effectively and accurately represents the CYSF position re: the outside world.

J. John Koornstra
R. William Osmars
CYSF Representatives
Stong College