

EXCALIBUR

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

Editor-in-Chief Andrew Michalski
 Managing Editor Tim Clark
 News Editor Marilyn Smith
 Cultural Editor Lynn Slotkin
 Photo Editor Lerrick Starr
 Sports Editor Alan Risen
 Cartoonist John Rose
 Business and Advertising Rolly Stroeter
 Advertising Manager Jackie Stroeter
 editorial phone: 635-3201, 3202
 advertising phone: 635-3800

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Constitution is best we could expect

The constitutional committee that sat through hours of exasperating and fruitless discussions on what to do about Council of the York Student Federation and the college councils deserves credit for that but little more.

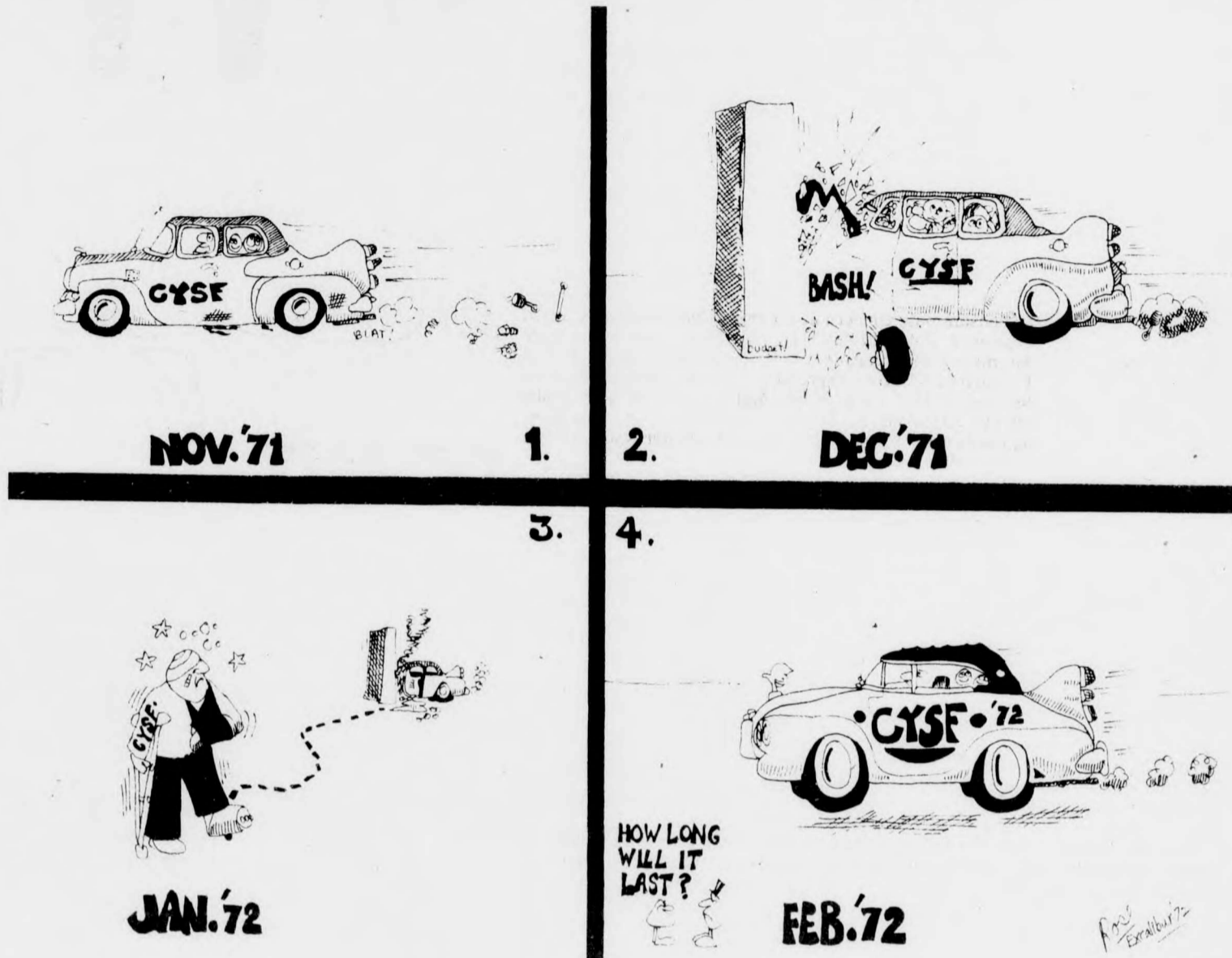
Despite historical bickerings that would strongly suggest a sharp division of powers was needed between the CYSF and the college councils, the committee has opted for a compromise which is workable yet leaves nobody really satisfied.

It has proposed a budget council to approve CYSF's budget in the fall. Every college council has a representative to give some input. Yet there is bound to be so much diversity in such a huge number (11) that problems may be quick to arise.

If CYSF is efficient that year, then the CYSF sponsored services — even if controversial — will at least get a fair shake. But if a perennial bone of contention, like Excalibur comes up and neither CYSF or the college councils really care, then its budget will be cut to satisfy the politicians — much to the chagrin of those who operate that service. The proposed York University Newspaper Act could solve that. Financial independence from politicians can preserve editorial freedom.

But what about other services such as the clubs, the perennial pawns of "that's your responsibility" attitude of both the CYSF and the college councils? They are the helpless victims of York student politics.

Stuart Keeley from student services correctly points out that at least now, the college councils only have one chance at the CYSF budget. That is a vast improvement. But there must be a quorum of one half the members and what happens if the college councils decide to boycott the meeting. Does CYSF get its funds to give to the clubs? As the act now states, CYSF must wait until enough councils decide they're even willing to sit down.



"Planned Obsolescence?"

When the budget council does approve CYSF's budget, a finance committee of four CYSF representatives and three college council representatives meets once per month. This is a good feature that keeps CYSF in touch with the college councils on its expenditures and yet keeps CYSF autonomous. It places

an onus on CYSF to keep a good financial account of itself each month, something that we fear has not gone on in the past. Finally, the new constitution does offer a glimmer of hope for some sort of stable future. But with so many checks on the new CYSF, it is only that, a glimmer of hope. All will depend on the

sort of leadership CYSF can attract to its presidency and the sort of co-operation the college councils decide to accord their central government. All in all, it leaves a great number of question marks but it is as much as one might have expected given the present power balance.

Staffers beware! Meeting today at 2 pm

Wright report — gov't control and the Quebec lesson

Rearguard action from students and faculty is a likely future development with increasing government control in the universities. This control, heralded by the recent report on post-secondary education, threatens to bureaucratize and homogenize the universities.

According to Laval philosophy professor Andre Coté such government bureaucratization already exists in Quebec.

In a recent lecture at York, Coté said the particular nationhood mentality of Quebec fosters provincial government control of education as a vanguard of the Quebecois nationality.

"The situation in Quebec is prophetic for the rest of the country," Coté said. In his view, the Quebec universities have less autonomy because the government control is a fully integrated, highly systemized form of management.

Coté maintained complete take-over of decision making processes, even by the legislative government, is extremely dangerous for the universities. When the takeover is for purposes of nationalism,

the situation is worse still, and the basic principles of a university are destroyed in the takeover process.

He sees the universities as agents of conservation and change, with side roles of national studies and societal critiques.

Coté's comments are especially interesting in the light of the recommendations of the Wright report and its emphasis on greater government control of the universities.

The monolithic provincial system, and a subversion of individual universities could well seep over into Ontario with adoption of the Wright report. The protection of the public's interests is the rationale for increased government participation. With rising enrolments and increasing government grants, the universities are feeling the government breathing down their necks.

The recommendations of the Wright report put university decision making in the hands of three co-ordinating boards which deal with the universities, the community and technical colleges, and an open sector of post-secondary

education. A senior advisory committee would report to the minister.

The co-ordinating bodies, with their executive powers of consent or refusal of university programs, is in a new powerful position of control. Checks on this power, envisioned by the report commissioners, are impotent in the face of the government advantage.

An informed public, an alert legislature, and volunteer groups — be they students or faculty or some combination of both, are the recommended checks on bureaucratic control. Yet what real power is wielded by these groups before a vast complex of government control?

Coté says in Quebec, the government has all the bargaining power, the power of the purse. Refusal of services is the only university bargaining tool, he says. These two bargaining points between the government and the universities must be in constant discord if one is to check up on the other. Too much self-indulgence by the university is as bad as over-control by the government.

The Wright recommendations weigh the balance of power too far in favor of the government. The proposed checks have no real power basis.

The report has a constant theme of accessibility of post-secondary education for many people. This suggests a democratization of the education system. Yet true democratization is a process of reverse flow. Decision making should generate from the lower levels. Cote suggests that co-ordinating, planning and paper pushing come at the top.

In the past, the Committee on University Affairs served as a buffer between the universities and the government. Now, accusations are made that this body is a mere mouth-piece for already decided government policy.

The increased decision power being handed to the government by the Wright report might well bring Ontario closer to Quebec in their approach to matters of education.