

# Parapsychology conference provides good overview.

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findings of modern science (e.g. the breaking apart of the atom) herald a greater interest in human potential, but also increase human gullibility and the need for something to believe in.

This need for certainty—in spiritual existence apart from the physical body, in life after death, and so on—was reemphasized on Saturday by Glendon Psychology professor Jim Alcock and by CBC *Morningside's* Lister Sinclair (in his introduction to the film: "ESP: Evidence and Certainty"). Alcock also spoke of the fallibility of memory and judgement (what we think happens is not necessarily what actually *does* happen). For example, if we dream of a house fire, then see a car crash during the next day, we might remember the dream as a car crash.

According to York Natural Science professor Harry Leith, the reality of parapsychological phenomena "has turned out to be exceptionally resistant to both its validation and its falsification," and though all the "trappings of science" are there, Leith doesn't believe that the substance is.

The final speaker, psychotherapist Howard Eisenberg, however, countered all the criticism of the field made thus far—the lack of repeatability, the effect of the experimenter's opinion on the outcome (this has been proven



to be present in most psychology experiments also), and the lack of a theoretical framework for parapsychology.

Eisenberg described the experiments he had carried out at McGill University in 1971: a "sender" watched a series of short films,

specially edited for emotional impact, and attempted to transfer imagery to his "receiver." The experiments were tightly controlled and took into account the fallibility of memory. They had overwhelmingly positive results, which have since been repeated.

However, the vehement and emotional opposition that Eisenberg faced at the staunchly conservative Psychology department at McGill, he contends, exemplifies the prejudice of the "establishment" against psychic phenomena. This, according to Eisenberg, is the main difficulty faced by parapsychologists everywhere.

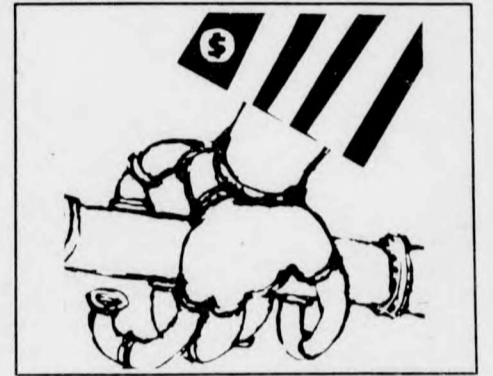
Regarding the lack of a theoretical foundation for psychic phenomena, Eisenberg pointed to their increasing compatibility with the findings of quantum physics. He explained the "wave" model of consciousness—the mind is not merely a selective receiver of sensory impressions, but is a part of the wave-like "connectedness" underlying the whole physical universe.

It was clear by the end of the conference that though parapsychology has been beset by difficulties and inconsistencies in the past (including fraud), more research is needed. The strongest force militating against its proper study, according to Rogo, is the resistance of

"emotional (as opposed to "scientific") skeptics."

According to Mann, useful strategy for parapsychologists would be to work through physics (in effect becoming "paraphysicists"), since psychology, ranking lower on the "hierarchy of sciences" is much more concerned about its image as a "scientific" discipline.

Finally, we are left with the question of whether "paranormal" phenomena are really paranormal as such, or if they are in fact "normal," but as yet unexplained. Or are they just bunk?



## How to get government information

By CAROL BRUNT

"Helping people talk to government" is the motto of the Canada Services Bureau, a bilingual referral service developed by the federal government's Centre for Service to the Public.

According to Hany Kirolos, one of four Client Service Officers at the bureau, the goal is "better awareness and access of federal services and programs" to the public.

Through various sources, the bureau attempts to help those who, says Kirolos, "don't know where to turn to." A common problem that the bureau deals with is the "break-down of what level of government deals with what.

Available at the bureau are free informational pamphlets, a government publications reference section, and government tie lines to Ottawa and across the country.

CANTEL, the government of Canada's 55,000-page Telidon Information Bank, can also be accessed through a terminal at the bureau. Among the information available are details on most programs and services available to the public from the federal government; a National Job Bank, listing jobs available across Canada through Canada Employment Centres; government statistics; and information on the environment.

The bureau also uses copies of the Index to Federal Programs and Services, a government of Canada publication. Updated annually, it describes hundreds of federal programs and provides contacts and telephone numbers. Copies are available for reference at York's Government and Administration Library.

"I think a lot of students haven't fully tapped us as a source," says Kirolos. In a recent release, the Centre confirms that "many students avoid the federal government as a reference source because the thought of finding the right person to talk to seems more trouble than it's worth."

The Toronto bureau is the regional headquarters for Ontario and is part of a network of bureaus across the country. In October they hope to become a base for a toll-free telephone referral service for the entire region.

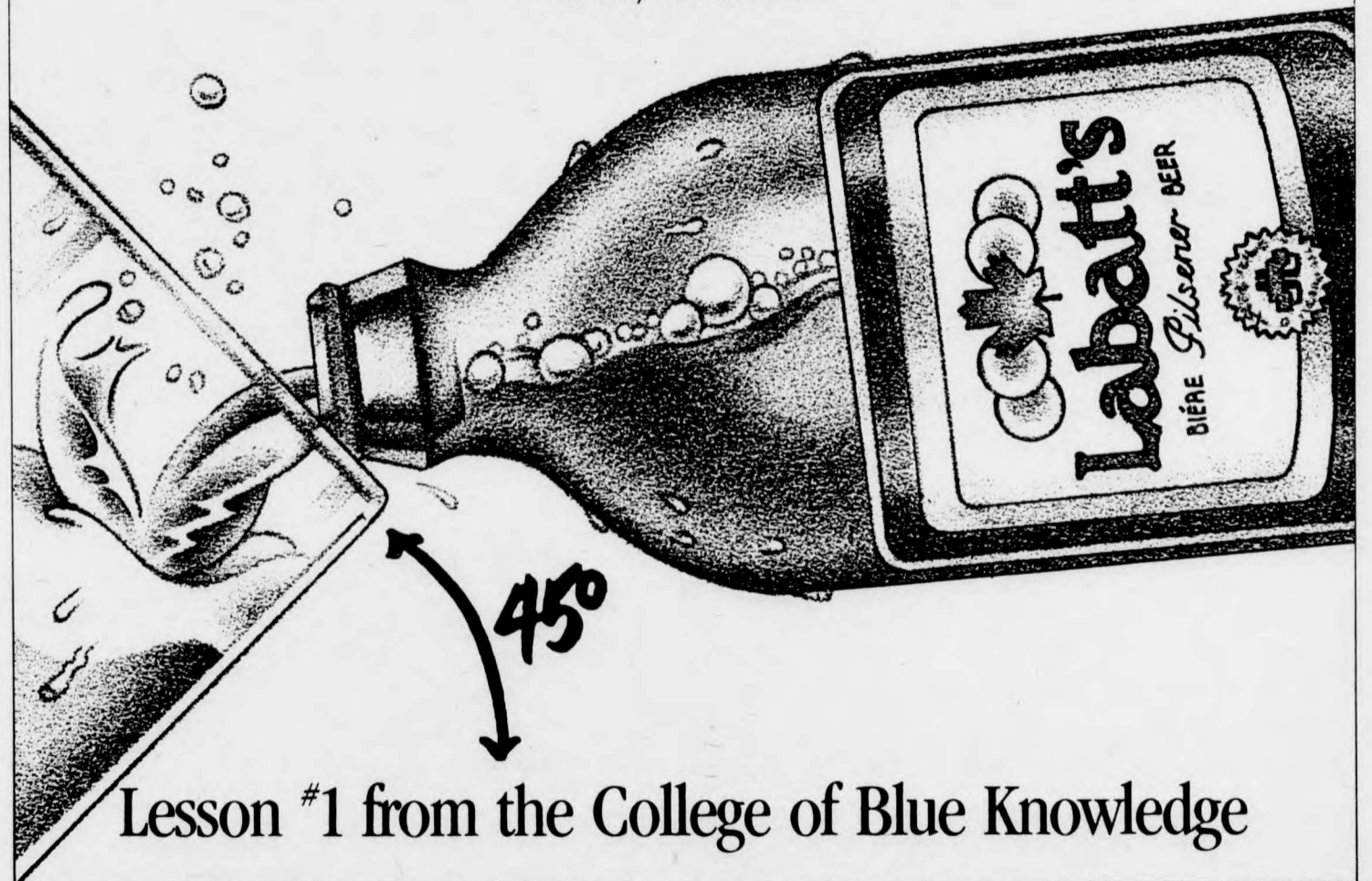
The office is located in the lower concourse level of the Holt Renfrew Building, 50 Bloor Street West. It's accessible to wheelchairs, and it's open to the public six days a week.

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Lesson #1 from the College of Blue Knowledge