

ZARNETT ZONE

Time to leave OFS

by MARTIN ZARNETT

CYSF should discontinue its membership in the Ontario Federation of Students (OFS). They should do this for two very good reasons. Firstly, the OFS does not represent students. Secondly the OFS does not represent York students especially. Until now not many at CYSF have recognized this problem; one that sucks over \$30,000 out of its annual budget. CYSF students have never received their money's worth. That is because OFS never believed that CYSF had the will or the ability to withdraw.

This topic is big news this week as far as student politics is concerned. Yesterday CYSF voted on this matter. I don't know how they voted but I hope they decided to withdraw. If they did it is legal and binding on CYSF and OFS.

CYSF has been a member of OFS since its inception in the early 1970's. At that time, as today, students needed a voice to represent their needs and concerns. This voice however was weakened over time. It was weakened by the OFS itself. OFS is now left out of the decision making process in Ontario vis-a-vis education because they are too busy working on general social issues rather than specifically lobbying and working on their primary objective—to represent the post-secondary student in Ontario.

This divergence was done for two reasons. OFS attempted to solicit support from anti-nuclear, labour and other traditional 'socialist' groups. In doing so they alienated all other mainstream groups including students and the Ontario government. This in fact weakened their base, as students who were middle of the road politically stopped supporting the pronouncements that came forward from the OFS offices. Secondly, it appears to me that the OFS 'fieldworkers' as they are called, enjoyed working on these non-educational issues more than they enjoyed working on subjects dealing with education.

Other problems that plagued OFS was their 'top heavy' approach to employing their fieldworkers. In 1983, OFS fieldworkers earned between \$22,600 and \$26,000. This has led to the problem of not enough fieldworkers for too many tasks. The organization has spread itself too

thin, as a result of these policies. This has meant that the largest and most secure (in OFS's eyes) contributors go without representation on campus on a full-time basis. In fact, OFS comes on campus on a full-time basis only three days a month on average. Only when a referendum takes place do we see a large OFS representation on an ongoing basis.

How should CYSF withdraw from OFS? It should be done by a vote in Council. There has been talk that a referendum is needed in order to withdraw. This is not the case. Legally, Council speaks for CYSF Inc. (CYSF is a registered Ontario corporation). Politically, a referendum might be a good idea, however the present administration's mandate is for only one year and by the time a referendum would be decided the present Council would no longer be in power. This present Council is doing too many things that should have been done long ago for the process to be slowed at this time. The corollary of this argument is that if and when the OFS changes or if and when CYSF elects a Council that would want to rejoin OFS they could also do that without a referendum.

In the absence of OFS, dynamic ideas by Council will transform that \$30,000 saved into positive results and representation for York University. The first thing that will be established, says CYSF President Reya Ali, is a research department. This department will be responsible for compiling information and reporting to Council the effect of policies and plans by the Ontario government and the administration at York. In addition Ali states that consultation will take place with U of T to determine how they have made the most of their withdrawal from OFS.

Ali also states that CYSF will reconsider rejoining OFS only after OFS has restructured to the point where the majority of funds would not leave the campus. In effect, CYSF is on the verge of establishing its own OFS. With two employees CYSF will be able to be the force on campus that it should be. This will mean that York will finally have the type of central government that it needs. A strong purposeful one; a council that sees the problems and knows how to deal with them.

LETTERS cont'd

Opinion piece a "vendetta" reader says

Editor:

Intellectual myopia, often called stupidity, often rears its ugly head under the guise of informed opinion. It is most often found in the Opinion/Editorial pages of newspapers, whose readership often shares the same characteristic inability to distinguish between properly researched and empirically based opinion and the obtuse rantings and ravings of a free-spending lethario with a bad haircut. The opinions expressed in regard to Reya Ali on September 12 in the OPINION are nothing more than boisterous bellowing—at a rather low mental capacity. By running around the issue of OFS and CYSF the author of this piece is engaging himself in nothing more than some sort of vendetta against Reya Ali. One can assume this is so because there is very little content in this piece outside of a condemnation of the president of CYSF. Informed opinion should be based, rather, on the issuance of criticism and a proposal for a better way of doing things—with supporting evidence.

As a person who has known Reya Ali for a number of years, in fact, since his very first year at York, I find it hard to believe that Reya would think himself even close to a deity. Biblical impressions of God often show us a mighty and powerful figure of great weight—Reya is much too thin for this role, and I suggest he probably doesn't have time for it either. Nor do I think Reya to be infallible because if he were infallible he would not be seen eating the food in the Central Square Cafeteria. In short, I think Mr. Symons has vastly over-rated Reya's stance within the universe for Mr. Ali's positions have always been practical and down to earth, rather than the pie-in-the-sky blatherings which Mr. Symons has to offer.

However, to the substance of the matter. It is quite odd to depict the president of CYSF as betraying some sort of election promise. In the real world of politics, movement from one position to another on various issues is commonplace. Such movement is often construed as "betrayal" of one's position because some of the supportive sycophants are dumb-founded to find out that, mirabile dictu, there is another side to the issue at hand. In the case of OFS it has become apparent that no amount of arm twisting is going to lead OFS to represent the interests of York University in any forum. This was apparent to me when I was Chairperson of Bethune as it was to my predecessors who also rejected the notion of membership in OFS. Our reasonings were based on the fact that membership in such an organization meant that a great deal of our monetary contribution was being spent on outside issues which I, for one, felt were totally ridiculous: peace rallies—to the point of overkill (we still have nuclear weapons and no one is about to change that), cruise missile rallies, abortion rallies, anti-American demonstrations of one sort or another. The money spent on these sorts of activities had nothing to do with improving the quality or accessibility of higher education in this province. So now we have a CYSF President who probably wanted to do something constructive with OFS but discovered what Bethune College Council had discovered many years ago: that you only see the OFS carpet-baggers at York when their monetary gravy train is threatened.

I would lastly like to remind Mr. Symons that in the world of good political leadership, a leader must be able to confront and act upon the anxiety of the people he/she represents, and must maintain the stance that is far more important to be right than it is to be consistent. To be too consistent is the plague of lesser men, for they are often consistently wrong. As for Reya Ali, he is a man who will not betray the primary notion of good leadership—being open and honest with his constitu-

ents, and working hard for their interests.

—Patrick Legris
Former Chairperson, Norman
Bethune College Council

Lounge won't solve woes, says prof

Editor:

I found it enlightening to read the two major articles on the front page of last week's *Excalibur* (September 12). I hope President Arthurs read both of them and that he was enlightened as well. One article concerned the opening of the new faculty lounge. It quoted Arthurs as saying that the administration has "been through a bad period with YUFA" and that "the building of the lounge has brought the two groups closer together." Prof. Arthurs would like us to believe that the new restaurant will bring YUFA and the administration closer together. He should know better. Someone should tell him that we need to come closer together in contract negotiations, not in a restaurant.

This brings us to the second article entitled "YUFA and administration far apart in negotiations." Many of us had hoped that a new president might exercise some much needed leadership and break the pattern of an administration which tells us year after year that we will have to pound the pavements if we want a settlement. That is Vice President Farr's yearly theme: unless YUFA can be ready to mount a strike the administration won't move. This year is no different, even though the President is new. The new faculty lounge is not the place for the President to seek a rapprochement with the faculty. He would be better advised to intervene in the administration's negotiating policies which have made York a "unique" university where strikes are almost a yearly occurrence.

—Howard Buchbinder
Associate Professor,
Atkinson College

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