

editorial



No bottom rung for women

What do politically-minded women at York do? They do not, apparently, run for election.

A surprisingly and disappointingly small number of women are involved in this year's student government elections — about 7.4 per cent of the candidates, on a campus where more than 60 per cent of students are female.

At the close of a year that has seen women holding many prominent positions at York — York Federation of Students president, editor-in-chief of *Excalibur* and two of the four YFS vice-president positions — the situation is perplexing.

The reasons are ominous and the implications huge.

Not having women in positions of power at the student level means issues like campus security, child care, sexual harassment, date rape, employment equity and curriculum content may not get the attention they deserve.

But why is this happening, and why now?

Obviously the problem isn't at the top, which is currently pretty estrogen-heavy.

It's more important to look at the grass roots — the places where women get their political training, apprenticeship, indoctrination.

Look at the colleges. Supposedly the training-grounds

for aspiring student politicians, most of the college councils have descended into an inextricable morass of macho jousting. Most women take one look through their council-room doors and abandon their political aspirations forever. Who wants to hang out with those kind of guys?

Some of them will inevitably flee to the women's centre — a traditional boot camp for grassroots politics, women-style. But lately, the women's centre has been about as political as the badminton club.

Far from encouraging women to enter politics and challenge the system, the women's centre collective has turned in on itself. If its members realized what power they have, maybe they'd take advantage of it.

And the YFS, despite its women-positive stance, is not exempt from blame. Far from it. If you are an ordinary woman student and you want to learn the political ropes, where would you go in the YFS? It has no volunteer system, no women's caucus, no training seminars.

The fact is, the political ladder at York doesn't have a bottom rung for women. Either you start at the top — usually through connections with the Young Boys' Network — or you're left out.

And that's where most women students are: left out.

excalibur

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EXCALENDAR

Wednesday March 4

General Staff Meeting at 4:00 pm

(All are welcome)

Introduction to Newswriters Workshop at 5:00 pm with Big Chris and Big Jay and Big Jen

Thursday March 5

Editorial Board Meeting at 2:00 pm

Black Writers Caucus at 3:00 pm

Monday March 9

Women's Caucus at 5:00 pm

Wednesday March 11

Freedom of the Press at 2:00 pm with

Staff Elections at 4:00 pm

Thursday March 12

Staff Elections at 4:00 pm

"Men who teach only men are called scholars. Women who teach only women are called political agitators."

— Dale Spender