

letters

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Shift focus from disability to ability

Dear Editor:

I am writing in response to a letter which appeared in the March 15 issue of *Excalibur*, in which George Rappos takes it upon himself to exemplify the epitome of ignorance towards DIFFERENTLY ABLED people. I realize that it is not entirely his fault that he does not understand those who are not as physically able bodied as they might like. Some blame must be put onto media that is always portraying people with disabilities as inspirations or someone who we should feel pity for. In his letter he makes several ridiculous and plainly stupid assumptions about what it must be like as he puts it to be confined to a wheelchair.

Those who require the assistance of a wheel chair are not confined. They are as free as Mr. Rappos or anyone else. Rappos reports that the man he was staring at was definitely a paraplegic because he had obvious troubles with his arms. Let me inform you, Mr. Rappos, in the first place paraplegics do not necessarily have trouble with their arms. Secondly, I have limited use of my arms, however, I am not a paraplegic.

Mr. Rappos lists a number of things this man cannot do, such as leap hurdles, answer the call to battle and enjoy sex. I don't know

anyone who would agree on the last point. Furthermore, he has no foundations to base his assumptions on other than the mere presence of a chair. This constitutes ignorance.

As a student trying to start an organization here at York to support the needs and concerns of people who need some help, I must take this opportunity to try and set the record straight. Instead of seeing all the things that this man can not do, why not concentrate on all those that he can. My goal in writing this is not to blast Mr. Rappos, but rather to help him see the man and not the chair.

We must shift the focus from the disability to the ABILITY.

Ron Pethick

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opinion

The Berlin Wall

"the world should look at the new situation with great caution"

by Derek Polcyn

Derek Polcyn is an economics student at York. He was born in Krakow, Poland and studied at university there. He lived in Sweden for two years and has travelled extensively through Europe and the Soviet Union.

Perhaps the opening of the Berlin Wall should not signify the end of the Cold War but rather a beginning of a complicated, unpredictable future for the two Germanies and for the rest of the world. German reunification is a very broad and complicated issue. My aim is to briefly show the uniqueness of German society and culture and the implications this uniqueness may have in the future.

As the new face of Europe emerges, national chauvinism remains a part of the European spirit which has retained its character over the last 500 years. There have been times, throughout European history, when this chauvinism has been one of the predominant factors from which wars and conflicts have ensued. The German nation was renowned for its extreme patriotism in the past. History has its value in understanding how past trends influence present and future trends. How much is the past different from the future?

Some historical facts are worth mentioning in order to gain an historical perspective of the German reunification and its possible consequences. Before 1850, Germany did not exist as one nation, but as 39 independent states. Due to Bismarck's policy of "blood and iron," Prussia managed to unite these states into one country. During this time, Prussia was a highly militaristic state. Attitudes in Prussian society towards the military at the beginning of the 20th century were recorded by the historians of the period as being:

"After God the Father comes the cavalry officer, then his mount, then nothing, nothing, still nothing, then the infantry officer. Very far behind come the civilians: first the reserve officer and at last ... the remainder."

Germany prepared for World War I by strengthening its army. However, at the end of the war, Germany was defeated and signed the *Versailles Treaty* in which it was to return Alsace-Lorraine to France, and pay unbelievably large war reparations to the victorious Allies.

Although the Allies installed the democratic Weimar Republic, German society was dissatisfied with the outcome of World War I. In 1933, Hitler, with the largest existing political party, assumed

power during Germany's economic crises. He managed to push Germany into nationalistic frenzy. Hitler used the violation of the rights of Germans living in neighbouring countries as an excuse to invade those countries.

Germany lost World War II, and was divided into East Germany (mostly old Prussian territory) and West Germany. Also, it lost some of its territory to Poland. After the war, the U.S. was financially assisting its ally, West Germany.

Faced with the Communist "Iron Curtain," it was a tactical move on West Germany's part to "superficially" embrace Western culture. Historically, the German nation has never held a Central European position, being neither Eastern or Western in its cultural characteristics. Thus, West Germany was never truly receptive to the Western political and social institutions due to the strength of its own culture.

There still remained groups of Germans living in other countries, such as Poland, Russia and Romania, after World War II. These groups were discriminated against by the governments of these countries. During the following years, these Germans instigated attempts to obtain minority rights. For instance, one group organized in Poland to fight for the right to emigrate to

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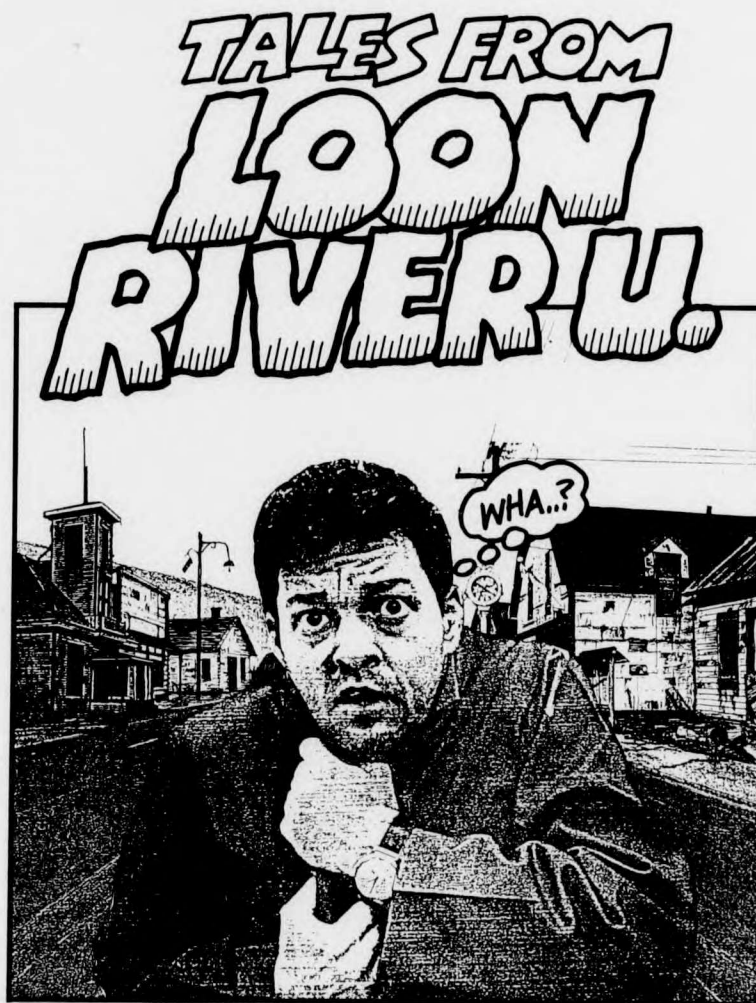
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It was time for Spring Break. And for Loon River U student Billy Joe MacBride, not a moment too soon. Especially since that unfortunate incident in Chem Lab. It was time to get out of town. So he collected what meager funds he could and took Voyageur's Mid-Week Student Special far, far away. You can, too. Travel any Monday to Thursday excluding statutory holidays, and go for 1/3 off our regular fares. Unless you want to spend your spring break in Fort Loonerdale.

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