

Pressing Issues

by Mark Wright

It was September '87 when I first walked into Founders College. I stood in the middle of the hallway getting jostled by students in a panic to get to classes, and tried to get a feeling for the place. I didn't know much about the college, in fact, I had picked it over the others simply on the whim of a blind decision my finger had made.

I was intimidated, frustrated and confused by this foreign environment. And the last thing I wanted to do was admit my complete ignorance about the university to every passer-by just to get a little information. So, I sat down on the floor to ponder over this complex dilemma. I realized I was sitting on a newspaper. It was *The Finder*. It was only a paper, and I don't recall if I even thought it was a good one, but it told me things I wanted and needed to know.

If I sat down in that hallway today I would be waiting a long time before another *Finder* appeared, because it doesn't exist any more.

In fact, if you were to look around the campus you would probably find that college papers at York are having some serious problems. McLaughlin College's paper — *The Mirror* — last printed in '87, Winters College paper — *The Highlighter* — published one issue this school year in November, Calumet College's — *Calumetro* — published twice, Stong College's — *The Flyer* — has published only four times and *The Vandoo*, Vanier College's paper, comes out once a month.

Many of the problems the colleges face rise from the fact that the college papers are not permanent fixtures in the colleges themselves. At the beginning of each year a council can choose not to have a paper simply because it is not a part of its mandate.

That has been the case for the last two years at Founders College says Founders master Arthur Haberman. "We had a paper in the '87-'88 school year and we put out some good issues. But that was an experiment and it just didn't float. There's a lack of interest on the part of the council who have other priorities.

"The council feels a central paper does the job. There's nothing wrong with having a number of papers on campus. It's just that we [Founders] haven't had a need for it and I don't think the community is going to fall apart without it," Haberman said.

The community might not fall apart without a paper, but it certainly seems to make it stick together better. *The Lexicon* provides a ready example. It currently is the strongest of all the college papers and it certainly has enhanced the reputation of Bethune. All you have to do is look at the members of the Council of the York Student Federation (CYSF) this year and count how many were affiliated with Bethune.

In theory, college papers help promote a college by focusing on its social and cultural events. It gives the college a higher profile on the campus. At the same time, it can be a far better watchdog of its council's goings on than any campus wide paper. But there is a problem with the watchdog role, because college council's control the purse strings of the papers.

Lexicon editor John Montesano feels it is pre-

cisely because of this dependence on college councils that college papers are in the state they're in. A college paper needs to be independent from the council so that it can freely report on all events, he says.

In the past there have been problems when the college papers have criticized the councils that supported them. And it is a problem that often repeats itself.

"If the editor of a college paper were to get up on a soap box and criticize the council, chances are the next president would be hesitant to fund a paper," says Winters College president Joe Zammit.

Last year Vanier College Council fired *Vandoo* editor Darryl Wiggers because several people threatened to sue the paper for libel. Wiggers was rehired to publish the last paper because Vanier's constitution at the time stated that editors could only be removed for financial mismanagement. The result of this was that the *Vandoo* came out only sporadically, and made starting this year's paper even more difficult, says this year's editor Brett Lamb.

"There was a lack of continuity because we didn't come out enough last year. This year we pretty much had to start from scratch. By December we'd improved 200 per cent, but when we started we didn't know anything," said Lamb. The biggest problem with the lack of continuity is that you lose your presence on campus, he says, and that makes it even more difficult to get volunteers to work at the paper.

Yet, even when councils have supported a paper and not become involved in the editorial policies, the college papers at York still have problems getting papers published. And some councils blame the lack of funds.

McLaughlin College Council president David Tushingham said his college should have a paper, but his council is underfunded. "We get \$52,000 for our budget, the second lowest of all the colleges. We can't afford to even have a computer."

But money isn't everything, at least not for all college papers. Winters College gets about \$69,000 from the university, \$2,500 of which was given to *The Highlighter*. Bethune College gets \$59,000 and budgets about one seventh of it for *The Lexicon*.

Zammit says *The Highlighter* probably won't use all the money it was given because the money goes mostly towards the actual printing costs and the paper is expected to only come out once more this year. The November issue cost *The Highlighter* approximately \$760 for 4,000 papers on newsprint. But, he added, more funds would get the paper the equipment it needs.

"Right now they've [*The Highlighter*] had to beg and borrow. At one point they had to go to *The Lexicon* to do some of their paste up," said Zammit.

He explained that Winters was in the process of laying the groundwork so that the paper, which is really going to be more of a fine arts magazine, will become a more permanent part of the college. He hopes that the creation of a board of publications, currently pending approval, will help ensure the existence of a paper.

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