

THE STATUS OF YORK SECURITY

BY PAULETTE PEIROL

SECURITY IS ONE OF THE MOST contentious issues facing York University today. This has been demonstrated not only by students but by the security force itself.

In the past year, security officers have filed more than 150 grievances against the Department of Security and Parking Services, staged two work refusals in protest of their schedule, and have released confidential security information to the student body.

Students, meanwhile, have voiced their concern about inadequacies in the security system through an open forum, a petition signed by over 1,200 people, and an open letter to University President Harry Arthurs.

Are the concerns of the York community warranted? "In my opinion, there are problems," said Provost Tom Meininger. The issue seems to be one of perspective, as statistics alone can be alarming when taken out of context.

Consider the following:

York hires one full-time security officer for every 1,666 students on campus (a total of 24 officers for 40,000 students). Yet this ratio is comparable to that found at other large Ontario universities such as Western (1:1,875) and the University of Toronto (1:1,621).

In 1985, York suffered the highest dollar loss in property theft (\$153,428), and the second highest loss from damage such as arson and vandalism (\$82,636), compared to the province's other universities. Yet University administrators point out that York is the second largest university in the province, and now boasts a much expanded crime prevention unit to combat theft and vandalism.

One fact, however, cannot be disputed: reported incidents of crime at York are on the increase. From 1985-86, assaults increased from 10 to 29, suspicious persons/acts from 18

to 52, break and entries from 37 to 92, and "disturbances" from 43 to 70.

It is these figures which are most unsettling to the York community and have made the adequacy of campus security questionable. "The concerns of the community are based on legitimate grounds," Meininger said. Yet while concern is unanimous, no consensus has been reached as to future changes in York's security system.

Points of contention include: procedural guidelines, scheduling, status and training for York's 24 security officers; community involvement on security matters; and the accountability of the department to Metro Police and the public.

Many of these issues are not new to university campuses, and have in fact been debated for over 20 years. What has changed is the York community's attitude toward security.

"In the politicized environment of university campuses worldwide in the late '60s and '70s the question of police on campus became a hot, controversial topic," Meininger explained. "People complained of too much security on campus and felt that police shouldn't intervene except as a last resort."

In *Freedom and Responsibility in the University*, a 1969 report commissioned by York's first president, Dr. Murray Ross, the question of police intervention is described as "a matter of judgment, for which this Committee cannot lay down any measure." Only "a reasonable apprehension that a breach of the peace will occur may justify police intervention," the report stated.

With regard to security services, the report outlines the duties of security staff as providing assistance to University members, guests, and visitors, protecting buildings and property, controlling traffic, and assisting in public functions. "The security staff have no police pow-



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ers, and the Committee was assured by the director of these services that he does not seek them."

Meininger noted that in the late 1970s, the social pendulum shifted toward a more conservative stance. "The nature of the University changed—for example, the needs of women came up—and York was asked to take a more interventionist role," he said. "Now, there is a strong sense that the community wants security, however that security is best provided."

Although campus views on security have changed, it seems that Administrative policies on the matter have not kept pace. The mandate of York's present security system is hardly distinguishable from that outlined in the *Freedom and Responsibilities* report written 18 years ago.

95 percent of the duties performed by York security officers, according to a 1985 official job description, are parking control, patrolling buildings, and escorting emergency vehicles. The job's physical demands entail "daily walk-

ing and climbing of stairs." Each security officer is responsible for "identification of unusual circumstances during regular patrols," and to "enforce university rules and regulations in a professional manner."

THE CHANGES BEGAN WHEN Jack Santarelli, former director of Security and Safety, assumed his post in August 1984. According to Vice President Bill Farr (Finance and Administration), Santarelli thought the department was "woefully understaffed and unorganized." During his two-and-a-half year tenure, Santarelli introduced a new system of directors, adding five managers to the department for Security, Investigations, Services, Parking, and Safety. An extra 27 support staff were also hired.

Santarelli increased the Safety and Security budget by \$250,000 (largely gained through increased parking revenues), expanding the



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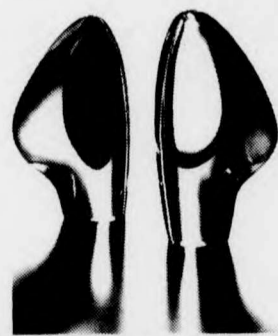
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