

Beer-boosting columnist

Rimstead fails to excite Bearpit audience

By PAUL KELLOGG

It was the weekly Radio York Bearpit. Milling restlessly about the corridors of Central Square, the noon-hour crowd impatiently awaited the arrival of Paul Rimstead.

His fame had gone before him: big-time beer pusher for Carling-O'Keefe (a well-known corporate hockey fan), small-time drummer at The Sapphire (a club somewhere in Toronto), and sometime columnist for the Toronto Sun (a paper somewhere in Toronto).

They were lucky. This year he was only 15 minutes late. Last year it took him almost an hour to waddle around our convoluted collection of one-way roads and arrive for his blind date with Rick Leswick.

But at last he arrived. Nattily attired in a form-fitting suit ("I borrowed it from the guy I live with"), he strode across the pit to settle his paunch carefully in front of the mike. Trying hard to leave at least one ulcer undisturbed, he balanced a foot on the opposite knee, placed his elbows on the chair's arms, and faced his audience.

Electric tension crackled between the antagonists, tension resulting from a classic confrontation between a thinker of the establishment and hostile rebellious youth.

He burped. Considering this a moral if not a philosophic victory, the crowd from then on deigned only to observe, ignoring the possibility of hounding their adversary with biting, intelligent and nerve-numbing questions.

The discussion covered a wide-range of topics and, despite Rimstead's reputation as a man of strictly humorous intent, looking for the best witty rejoinder or sar-

castically destructive phrase, a bar-room wit selling beer, many of the issues discussed were of a serious nature and were discussed seriously.

Rimstead made the point that his recent campaign for mayor was serious. "It started as a joke in the Brunswick House. Some of my friends knew I had an old VW so they bought me a lunch pail and said I could represent the working class. I went along with the joke after 15 or 16 drinks.

"After a bit of door-knocking, though, I got serious. I really thought I was the best man for the job. No one believed me though. Most people still think it was a joke."

Rimstead has long been concerned with conditions inside the Don Jail. Recently, the issue of "goon squads" beating up inmates has become a popular topic of debate.

"I wrote about those goon squads years ago," said Rimstead, "but nobody listened."

APATHETIC SILENCE

He mentioned race problems, and gun-control, and controlling urban growth, and liquor laws, always with a joke at the ready, but always in a concerned and sensible manner.

Despite these and other harbingers of fiery debate, apathetic silence descended over the audience, the floor mikes standing lonely and cold. In all, only three questions were delivered to Rimstead from the floor. The role of advocate was left almost exclusively to Rick Leswick.

Leswick, poking for controversy, conjured up the image of Western Guard mayoralty candidate Don Andrews, recently released from the pit, and asked his guest to comment.

Rimstead: "I'd rather not waste my time talking about Don Andrews.

He represents nothing important or significant."

Leswick: "However, there is a right-wing lunatic fringe growing in this city, and some people blame the Toronto Sun. Could you give us your opinion of the Sun's editorial policy?"

Rimstead: "I didn't know they had one. You mean they've really started writing something (editorials)?"

Leswick: "Don't you read the Sun, seeing as you write for it?"

Rimstead: "No, hardly ever. I just put my column in a taxi once a day and say good riddance until tomorrow.

Leswick: "How much in advance do you write your column?"

Rimstead: "Minutes." Laughter ensued, but no questions.

As the pit session drew to a close, a brief trio of questions did come from the floor. Desperately searching for a news story, this reporter digested his butterflies and approached the recently virgin microphone.

"Mr. Rimstead, why does nobody listen to you?"

Immediately I regretted the question. A subject had been broached that was personally important and saddening for our guest.

After a brief silence, he wearily smiled and simply replied that "no-one respects my opinion. I'm saying nothing controversial and I don't intend to. The only way you attract attention is by being involved in controversy."

Looking for a place to stub a smouldering butt, Rimstead was handed a styrofoam cup, retrieved from the Bearpit trashcan by the

ever-intrepid Leswick. In sonorous tones of wisdom, Rimstead declared, "If I butt it in that it's gonna burn a hole through my pants."

Appeased by the reassuring smile of Rick Leswick and the reassuring silence of the expectant crowd, Mr. Rimstead succumbed and styro-

foamed his butt.

Five minutes later the flaming make-shift ash-tray, billowing coffee-scented smoke, was carefully removed from the pit to be extinguished somewhere in the unexplored bowels of the Ross building.

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