

York's grape gripe: a look at the good and the bad

Tell them to stop

The following two articles are two viewpoints of the controversy regarding California grapes.

As you have read before in Excalibur, the California grape pickers have been trying for five years to gain the right of collective bargaining guaranteed them by the American constitution. However, the powerful growers lobby in California has stopped any effective legislation, and is hiring Mexican scab labour to replace the striking workers.

The only answer to the dilemma seems to be action on the part of concerned citizens in the form of economic boycott.

Students, who have long made it clear that they are concerned about their own rights, have, at such places as U of T, petitioned successfully for the removal of California grapes from the caterer's tables. York's food committee turned down the petition here, saying like all good white middle class liberals that it is a matter of individual conscience.

This issue, unlike that of recruiting, is clear cut. There is no doubt as to whose rights are being trod on. And individuals not buying the grapes is not the answer. Once Versafood has purchased them from the wholesalers, the growers already have their money, and their power has not been touched. And if Versafood loses money, the university makes up the loss, and in the end the students pay for that loss. The only answer is to tell Versafood to stop buying the grapes.

The food committee, whose members from Mac college have made their views clear on this page, have failed to show any concern or sympathy for a subjugated group of people. They have the power to tell Versafood to stop buying the grapes.

Perhaps the students of this university, through their respective student councils, should make their desires known a little more forcefully.

Tell your representatives to tell Versafoods to stop buying California grapes.

Good

by Lyba Spring

On Monday, Jan. 27, I attended a meeting of the Food Services Committee to finalize the procedure of removing California grapes from our cafeteria. I considered this committee's decision to be a formality, since, on Nov. 21, YSC passed a motion urging Versafood to stop buying these grapes, which are subject to boycott.

I was wrong.

After listening to a half hour discussion on the texture and odour of the steak served on Sunday mornings, (and after watching the committee devour the steaks in question) one kindly member pointed out that since an outsider had come to deal with the grape issue, they might get on with it. I had previously handed out fact sheets on the question, the same ones that council members received on Nov. 21, they perused these, as Mr. Selan, the business manager introduced the discussion. He read the memo from Marshall Green about

Bad

by D.C. Fitz-Gibbon (MIII) and O.A. Manester (MIII)

Since we anticipate that some comment will appear in your paper concerning the recent action taken by the York Food Services Committee regarding the continued "availability" of California grapes, we as individual members of that organization wish to state our case. As mover and seconder, respectively, of the motion that a sign appear indicating that the grapes are from California and subject to boycott, we wished to transfer the moral decision to the individual student. This is not an evasion of the issue! We personally support the boycott and urge all others to do so.

We feel however, that this decision should lie entirely with the individual. Neither YSC, nor any other body has the right to decide what our action as individuals should be. Versafood Services has indicated that they will cease ordering this product if there is no demand for it. It is the responsibility of those promoting the boycott to influence the student body to action, not to dictate what that action should be.

We noted with pleasure YSC's interest in the recent meeting. For the first time they exercised their right to seat a voting member. The YSC representative had the right and the opportunity to introduce a motion of solidarity for the California workers, but he chose not to do this. We regretted his departure immediately following the passage of the original motion. No doubt that YSC's member will show renewed enthusiasm in the future.

The Food Services Committee is an appointed group. Individual members volunteer their time and generally do an excellent job of working with the administration and Versafood Services Inc. to improve the student service on this campus. If YSC or any other body suggests that this commit-

Council's motion.

I added that Council had been presented with petitions from three colleges with some 500-700 names. He mentioned Glendon's committee's latest decision to re-install grapes after a three-month absence. I added that during this absence, there had been no protest demanding these well-loved, scab-picked grapes.

He mentioned that observers would be well-advised to refrain from further comment until committee members had spoken. I did so, until the question of free choice came up. I reiterated Pro Tem and Excalibur (Jan. 23) statements that it is a specious argument to use "individual choice" as a criterion for decision, since, once the grapes are paid for by Versafood, it makes no difference whether or not the students buy them. To involve ourselves with vacuous phrases like "individual choice" when people have made their choice and commitment to a non-violent strike and boycott, is to make null and void the principle behind the phrase.

The liberal-minded food committee decided to take their "stand" by putting up a sign in front of the grapes. Thus, the principles of inalienable rights of the individual are preserved forever.

If they were so concerned about rights, what about the right of elected representative council to influence the decision of an appointed committee? (Obviously the food committee voted according to a personal decision and not a representative one. I have the petitions to prove it).

Putting up a sign is a perfect example of the kind of fence-sitting tokenism practiced by Steinberg's stores. Boycotts do not work when the boycotted items are bought. Steinberg's buys grapes. Versafood buys grapes. I cannot state the case against the growers more strongly than do Pro Tem, Excalibur, Toronto papers, Mayor Wm. Dennison, Wm. Archer (who, incidentally, wrote Marshall Green to advise him that his aid was available, if needed), the U.S. Senate, etc. There are still people who are uninformed. I have spoken to such people.

To you, I say support a boycott which protests three years of striking by people earning less than the poverty income; a boycott which has been rendered futile by the illegal import of scab labour from Mexico. They have a right to collective bargaining; they have a right to a decent wage; they have a right to live.

U. of T. has been cleared of grapes. There, student opinion seems to have made the decision. Your student council has a decision, and it was ignored.

Doesn't it make you mad?

tee should be elective or responsible to an elected body, we would most certainly agree, assuming that its members would show interest in the mundane as well as the extraordinary.

We hope that those who disagree with the majority (7-3) vote of the committee will understand that this was a mature, responsible action, and will refrain from throwing too many "sour grapes" our way.

AD HOC

Hi. I'm a marijuana cigarette.

Some people call me a joint or a weed or even grass!

Others call me a narcotic and a dirty, filthy mind destroyer.

No matter who or what you are, people always discriminate against you...

Former YSC commissioner comments

Englander discusses the past YSC and prays

by Larry Englander

In the present YSC campaign, I think the big word is "ideology". We're going to hear a lot about what the purposes of the university are, what its objectives should be, and what our role as students should become. But are we going to hear about policy, or methods, or tactics? It's fine to have a vision of a "new university", but it's just going to sit on paper unless we can find a way to implement it.

Perhaps the present candidates can take a lesson from this year's YSC. Although we were rather weak in policy and tactics, at least we did establish a framework. We tried a lot of different approaches and we stuck with those that worked.

But a lot of things didn't work, and many others were never even tried. We never did find a workable relationship with the administration; maybe it's because they just won't listen — or maybe it's because we used the wrong approach. We never decided where we stood in relation to the Canadian Union of Students. We never tackled problems such as birth control, narcotics, or police on campus. But most important, we never successfully related to you people, the students we represented.

This brings us to the logical question:

which of the candidates will find solutions and implement them? Let's start with the presidential candidates: I strongly believe that Mel Lubek is the best choice. He has good ideas for involving students in YSC affairs — for example, a weekly YSC newsletter to keep students informed of council decisions and an informal, cabinet-style "idea-session" to discuss aims and methods with interested students. And once he knows the student point of view on a given issue, he wishes not only to have it discussed with the powers that be, but also to have it enacted. In other words, Mr. Lubek has two desirable qualities for a president; he is willing to listen to other points of view, and he has the political know-how to get things done.

There is one other matter I would like to discuss: the York Sunday Movement. Although they are one of the most enthusiastic groups on campus, they are

equally confused. They are always willing to talk about ideals, but they balk at discussing methods. But even though I could not vote for them en masse, they do have a few outstanding members, who are worthy of support; two of them who come to mind are Mike Blumenthal (Vanier) and Paul Axelrod (Winters). Therefore, as far as the YSM is concerned, I strongly recommend the following: speak to them as individuals, and see if they have anything uniquely their own to say. See if they are really aware of what York's problems are. If they pass the test, vote for them.

Election to YSC is going to place quite a burden of responsibility on the winning candidates. But let's not forget that the first onus rests with us. Any student body, in order to be successful, must get organized, and it must get involved. Unless the new YSC members have us behind them, as supporters and critics, they — and we — won't get very far.

Mr. Goldstein is on special assignment. His column will resume in two weeks.

