

Student Centre

York University

By STACEY BEAUCHAMP

The result of years of research, intensive campaigning and debate will materialize at the Student Centre Ground-breaking Ceremony at 2 p.m. this afternoon. After the Centre's expected completion in 1990, students will no longer be forced to loiter in the smoke-filled, crowded halls of Central Square, suffer with the poor food selection on campus, and criticize York as a distant and impersonal campus. The Student Centre will be the common place for most student activities. It will be *the place* for students to be.

Throughout York's history, the concept of a student centre has arisen many times. In fact, the University's original Master Plan in 1962 included one, but due to the government's freeze on funding during the 1970s, the plan was never completed.

In 1971, the Council of York's Student Federation (CYSF) expressed a renewed interest in a centre, but it didn't become a real concern until the 1984 CYSF Presidential Elections. At that time York was experiencing the problems of increased enrolment and subsequent overcrowding, and an unrecognized commuter population. Although not a panacea, student politicians realized that a student centre would alleviate some of these growing concerns.

However, the Student Centre Project ran into problems in 1985. Student leaders did not run a campaign comprehensive enough to convince students to financially support the project, and in a Winters 1985 referendum, students overwhelmingly rejected the proposal.

But two years later, newly appointed CYSF President Gerald Blink revived the project by hiring Rob Castle, a veteran of student politics, to research the possibility of building a student centre.

Castle analyzed the unsuccessful 1985 campaign from "a political point of view, with business practicality thrown in." As well, he contacted other universities to see what student facilities York was lacking. Then, a "strategy sketch" of the initial programme was drawn up.

Student leaders unanimously approved the project's concept in 1986. In that same year, a group of York MBA students were commissioned to study whether or not the project was feasible.

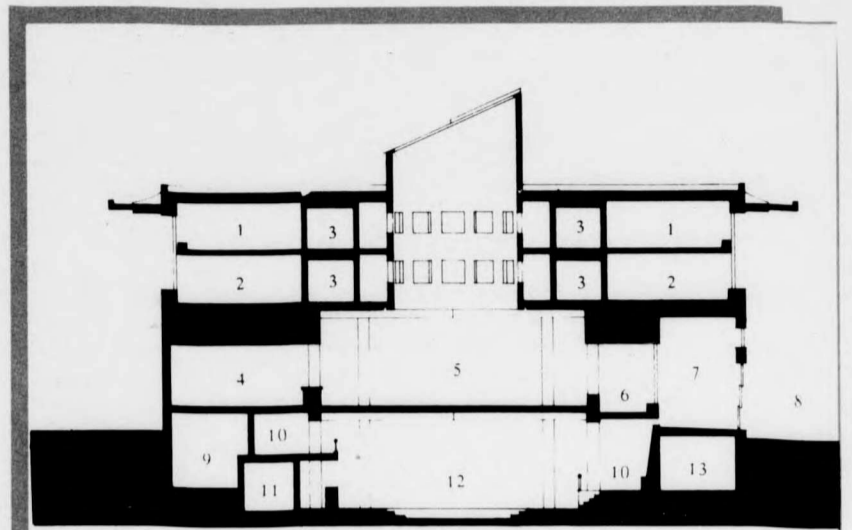
The results were encouraging.

In January 1987, a new referendum date was set. In addition, student leaders began an intensive public campaign, which was furthered by President Harry Arthurs' announcement that the University would donate \$3 million to the project. Finally, on March 11, students voted 81 per cent in favour of the new Student Centre proposal.

Castle feels that the primary reason for the successful 1987 campaign was thoroughness. They "kept discussing issues and tried to involve student leaders and maintained a very good information flow with students themselves," Castle said. "They made presentations to college councils and any group interested in listening, held public forums, and involved different departments and faculties. In general they made it a people campaign and tried to spread (themselves) around."

In October 1987 the Student Centre Project Committee, comprised of administration, faculty, and student representatives, was formed by President Arthurs. Its purpose, according to the building programme, "was to guide the project through to its completion."

"The Student Centre Committee and Provost Tom Meininger have done a superb job to make sure that the project moved forward," said Arthurs. He added that the Centre is "one of the most wonderful things that's happened to York."



NORTH SOUTH SECTION

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| 1. Offices and Associations | 7. Colonnade |
| 2. Organizations and Services | 8. Central Common |
| 3. Club Rooms | 9. Mechanical |
| 4. Food Concessions | 10. Pub Seating |
| 5. Food Court | 11. Service Tunnel |
| 6. Food Court Seating | 12. Pub |
| | 13. Kitchen |

Last spring, after nine months of intensive negotiation with university representatives, the committee signed a formal management agreement. The document, according to the building programme, "sets out the basic understanding with regard to the purpose of the building, its capital, and operational financing, its management and operations and related issues."

During the last few months, the Student Centre Committee has involved itself with the physical details of the building. With the ground-breaking ceremony, the efforts of dozens of York University community members will finally begin to pay off.

The Centre will undoubtedly have a positive impact on campus life. Castle said that the Committee has "attempted to complement existing facilities on campus." Some, however, feel that the Student Centre may negatively affect certain aspects of the University, such as campus caterers and college pubs.

Castle was not concerned about the caterers. He "has no qualms about competing with them because so far they have had a free ride. A little competition will help improve the quality of food on campus."

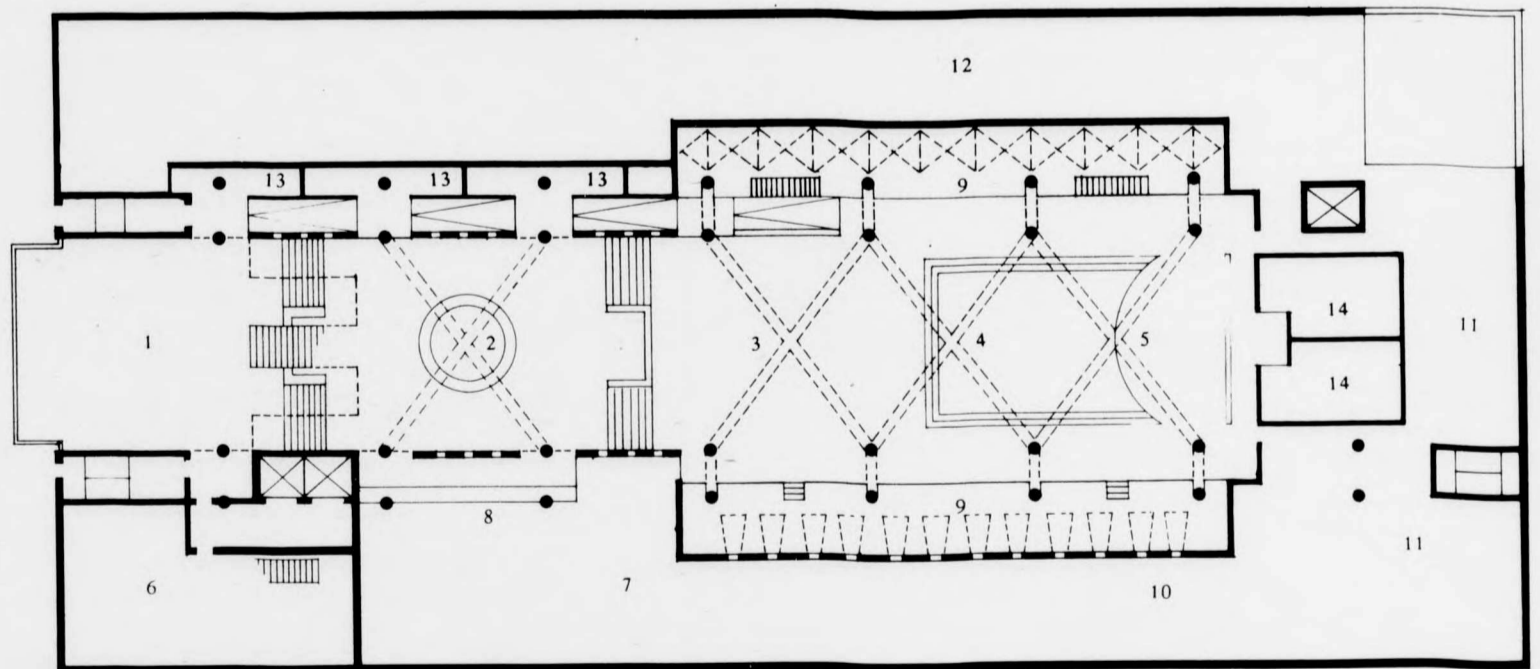
Castle said the issue of student pubs is less clear cut. He feels, however, that "if they define their space in the market they will survive." He also believes an overflow effect is likely. He explains that students who do not wish to wait in line at the Centre's pub, will likely end up at a college pub.

Open End Manager Pat Chester agrees with Castle. He doesn't think the Student Centre pub will "affect them a whole lot." Chester said that the College Pubs have good lunch, residence and night class crowds.

"People will still come in after classes, rather than trekking over to the Student Centre," he said. Chester added that "since there is always a line up on Thursday, the Centre will be there to help compensate for the overflow."

Other problems may arise within the Centre itself. For example, Castle anticipates a possible conflict between some of the clubs unless "there is a very sensitive treatment of the placement of each club office." By separating clubs that are not compatible, Castle said that many problems can be avoided.

Despite the conflicts that are bound to arise, President Arthurs feels that the Student Centre will benefit York by drawing a "whole new market to the university with its activities."



Student Centre basement plan