

EDITORIAL

Striving towards the proverbial "A"

There's a story which a past *Excalibur* editor related to our staff at the beginning of the year. It was his first year with the newspaper, late March, and after finishing an in-class exam, he dropped by the office to complete a story. There he found a bleary-eyed arts editor poring over yet another press release while extinguishing her last cigarette in an ashtray full of butts. It was a romantic image which one often associates with journalists. She looked up at him and asked the time. "10:20 am," he said. She slammed her pencil on the desk and shouted, "Damn! I had an exam at 10:00." But suddenly she became calm and resigned herself to the situation — an *Excal* story had to be done.

Five years ago that arts editor was like so many student journalists at *Excalibur*: the newspaper first, studies second. But that species of volunteer has all but vanished from our office, and like any other organization which relies so heavily on student participation, our resources are scarce during exam time.

It's a common symptom of the university student body today: marks are the most important commodity — they rate your success and determine what you will be doing in the future. At least that's the predominant perception of a university student in 1989. Unfortunately this narrow view often leaves the student ill-equipped to make the ultimate choice of what profession s/he wishes to pursue.

Most first-year students immediately pressure themselves into getting the "A" with little care about course content and where their interests lie. And too often second-year students will pick a major based on what courses give them the best chance of obtaining high grades. Of course, as our parents constantly told us, "Getting good marks will keep your doors open."

Well, ask the fourth-year "A" student what profession s/he plans to pursue. Chances are they won't have an answer. They'll stumble, and probably come up with the clutch response, "I'm thinking about MBA or law."

Certainly, the liberal arts education is failing if most students can only identify with law or MBA as a career path. But, students ask, what else can you do with a liberal arts education? What this implies in 1989 is: How much money can you really make with just an arts degree? Gone are the days when the main concern students had was occupational satisfaction. Students are just not aware of the many occupational fields that are available, and that it doesn't take a professional degree to make a decent living.

It should be the responsibility of the university curriculum to expose students to alternative career choices. A liberal arts education should not only teach students the skills of thinking critically, but it should also show the students the many fields where they can apply these skills.

The 1960s ideal of the university providing a holistic educational experience no longer exists. Instead, for many it's a business: Get the "A" and leave. But to do what? That's one question marks cannot answer, and it's a question which deserves just as much research as the essays students grapple with in pursuit of that illustrious "A".

Academic excellence is something all students should strive for. But this should not come at the expense of pursuing their interests when choosing courses or considering extracurricular activities. Students who make this sacrifice are not only missing out on one of the most important aspects of a liberal arts education, but they are liable to become the proverbial "A" student: All marks, no direction.

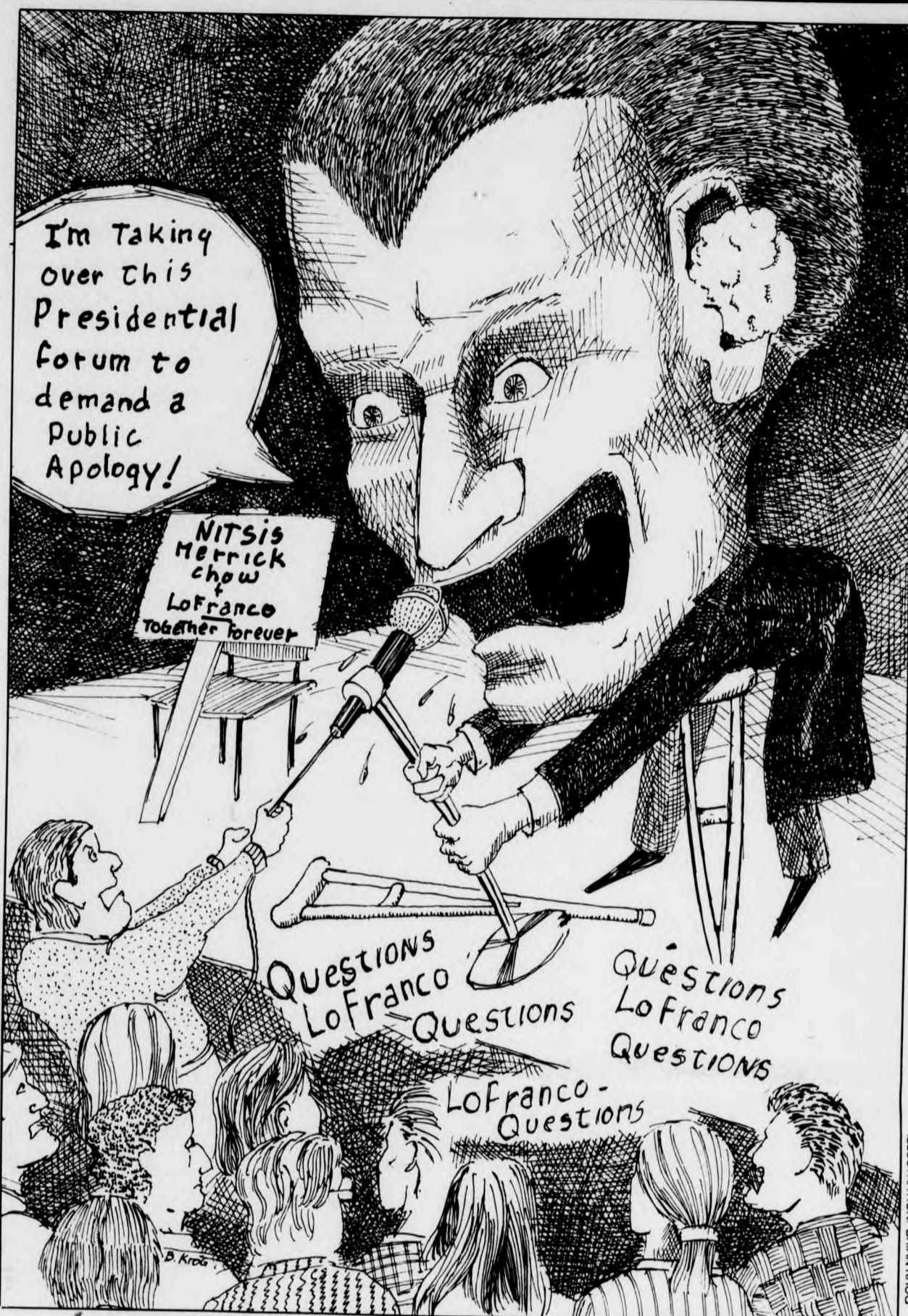


ILLUSTRATION: BRIAN KROOG

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LETTERS

Wiggers was "on-target"

Dear Editor,
It has come to my attention that Darryl Wiggers, editor of the Vanier College student newspaper, *Vandoo*, has been fired. For Vanier College Council (VCC) to take such steps is ludicrous. VCC's methods and means are contemptible.

VCC President Phil Downes says Wiggers was fired because of the "possibility of repetition of the printing of articles which might have legally serious implications to the College." Wiggers did print "controversial" articles about York Security and the Open End pub but claims he was never served notice from anyone specifying a complaint.

According to Ontario's Libel and Slander Act (1980), a newspaper must be given the chance to print a retraction before general damages for defamation of character can be sought from it by a plaintiff. But, first of all, there has to be a com-

plaint, and Wiggers says he never received such a defamation notice.

Obviously VCC knows little about the laws that govern the newspaper externally or internally, via the constitution of the college.

Vanier's new constitution (reformed at the end of the 1987-88 term) outlines the reasons for, and the methods to effect the dismissal of the editors of *Vandoo* or *Existere*, Vanier's litizine. The process must be handled by the college's publications board. This year, however, the board's director failed to hold those monthly board meetings. When VCC got peeved at Wiggers' editorials and choice of content, it took matters into its own inexperienced hands and fired him behind his back, handing him a pink slip without notice. Is that responsible student government?

As for arguments of economics, Wiggers was on-target with his budget and managed funds properly. Most students would agree that he made *Vandoo* an interesting read. Unfortunately, Wiggers wasn't providing the Girl Guide newsletter VCC wanted.

First, VCC must reverse their error of decision and reinstate Wiggers as editor.

Secondly, certain members of VCC acted without cause or jurisdiction and must take responsibility. Downes says he accepts "full responsibility" for the situation. To accept such responsibility, he and his publications director, Gavin Lumsden, must resign from their respective positions on VCC.

Finally, students should continue to monitor VCC for inept and arbitrary decisions. This repeat offender must be kept in check.

Sincerely,
Clark Hoskin

A question of human rights

Editors,
I was asked for an opinion from several people regarding your editorial of Thursday, March 2 ("York not guilty in discrimination case"). In

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excalibur

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