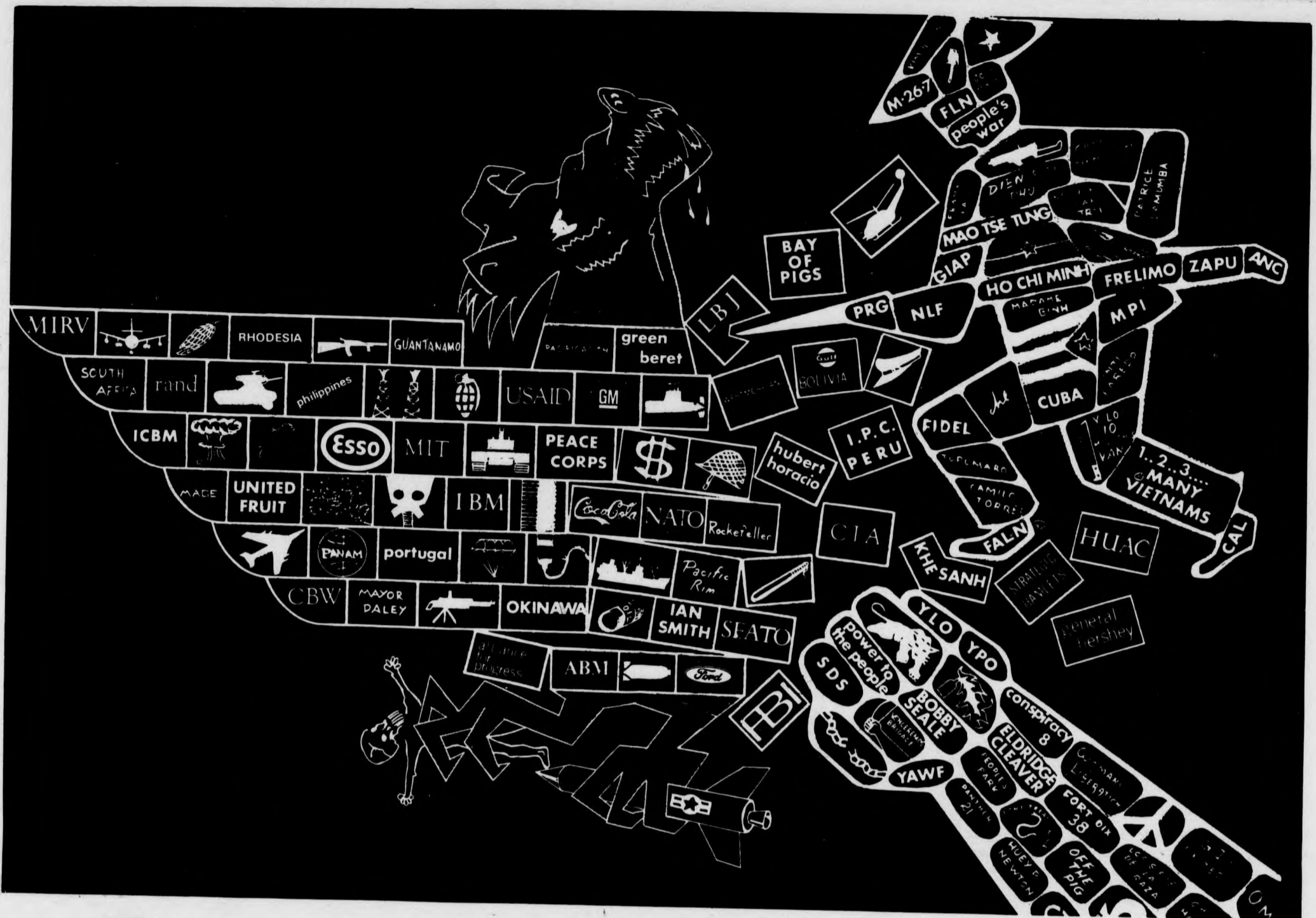


Excalibur

Everything secret degenerates; nothing is safe that does not show it can bear discussion and publicity — Lord Acton



The making of the president 1970

Tuesday was a bad day for the integrity of York University as an academic institution. It was Black Tuesday for the senate as a representative body for the interests of the faculty and students.

Some senators got their metaphors mixed, lost their political virginity without knowing it, and could not, would not, see that the ongoing search for a new president is essentially a power struggle between faculty and the board of governors.

This struggle will determine not only who shall be president but what kind of role the new president can play.

To get to a point, one of several, did Murray Ross tell an untruth to the senate when he stated that the board of governors had not yet received the report of the presidential search committee, including the famous three names.

He said that only the chairman of the board had received the report. How do we then account for the fact

that some members of the York faculty were telephoned by governors urging them to support one of the three candidates, both before and after their names were published in this paper and The Globe and Mail? Who told them—the chairman, or the president? Who has already broken the reporting procedures of the search committee as agreed on by both the board and senate?

To raise another point, why did the senate executive committee on Tuesday act as the defender of the board's interests, rather than as advocates of the senate's?

When the board set up the search committee last February it was to prepare a "short list" of the names of candidates and present the list to the board chairman. Incidentally, no students were included on the committee until the Council of the York Student Federation demanded participation.

Under the York University Act (1965), the board appoints the

president after "consultation with the senate". Last February the board chairman said the board would decide what this consultation meant, but he backed down when senators made it clear this was unacceptable.

The search committee was asked to help decide the meaning of consultation and it produced a draft which was used as a working paper for two joint meetings of the board and senate executive committees last June. These two committees recommended a reporting procedure later approved without change by the board, but amended by the senate on Sept. 25, 1969.

The senate voted to amend the reporting procedure so that its meeting to hear the search committee report would be held openly, rather than secretly, as its own executive committee had agreed with the board committee in June.

The senate also voted to amend the procedure so that the chairman of the search committee would report to senate the results of the preferential, secret ballot senate would conduct after the search committee's report.

The senate executive committee was then responsible for renegotiating the reporting procedure with the board's executive committee. In retrospect it can be seen as a mistake by senate because its own executive committee apparently did not believe in these two amendments. Please note that its committee had in June agreed to the opposite.

For mysterious reasons, probably nefarious, the board and senate executive committees failed to meet until Thursday, Dec. 4, despite the fact the senate had made its position clear on Sept. 25. Indeed, Bertrand Gerstein, a governor who sits on the senate and, incidently, the search

committee, was present in September to express his doubts about the amendments.

On Black Tuesday we saw the spectacle of certain members of the senate executive committee and other senators expressing the view that the old reporting procedure must be accepted since we were running short of time to select a new president—because the senate had made these two amendments on Sept. 25.

It was certainly not the fault of senate that there was no progress over the reporting procedure between Sept. 25 and Dec. 4. Apparently, only the president or the acting president and the board chairman had the authority to convene the executive committees and they chose not to act hastily.

On Black Tuesday the senate executive reported back to senate that the board executive committee would not budge on the two points of a closed senate meeting and no report to senate of its own preferential ballot.

We were then treated to the spectacle of Harry Arthurs, associate dean of Osgoode Hall and a member of the senate executive committee, playing his well-practiced role of mediator in a labor-management dispute.

Apparently, despite the fact he is a member of the York faculty, he cannot see beyond his legal blinders that a series of words in the York Act need not be subject to interpretation.

If we accept a literal interpretation of the act, the board will determine who will be president. If that is the case—and the majority of senators voted for that on Black Tuesday—then the senate deserves to have little or no say in the making of the president, 1970.

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