

More Letters to the Editor

Stong Master criticizes ULS political stand

Whether or not I am wise or justified in making public my reactions to the recent debacle of the CYSF election in a student paper which has supported the United Left Slate, I feel moved (charged though I will be with prejudice) to note certain curious "facts" and to ask particular questions.

But first, let me make clear the assumptions from which I speak as a member of the York community who is now completing my seventh year of teaching and involvement with students. I am here — and I would assume most students and other faculty are — because of a commitment to a belief that education is important, that it is indeed a matter of first priority for members of York involved in academic affairs.

If I were a student and were faced with the necessity of voting again because an election was so haphazardly run (as evidence so overwhelmingly suggests — this resulting in a discrediting of the democratic process), I would seek

answers to the following questions:

(1) What hard evidence was brought forward to substantiate the charge of the ULS that "John Theobald had successfully manipulated the vote through an Atkinson Student Association letters which supported him"? (Excalibur editorial, March 23, 1972, Page 6)

If there is no such evidence — and to my knowledge none has been presented — I would wonder about the wisdom of supporting a candidate from whom such innuendoes apparently have issued.

I would also ask the question about what constitutes undue influence on election day, since it is my recollection that Excalibur came out on the day of election with an editorial commenting on procedures in the Atkinson Student Association support of Theobald.

(2) I would consider what evidence or information has been presented by ULS candidate, Bryan Belfont, in the area of academic concern, to show that (a) faculties are not offering courses "to examine the real history, economics and politics of Canada and its working people" — and I would ask how "real" is defined; (b) I would ask how the ULS proposes to implement their demand for "student-faculty-staff control of the university".

In Belfont's platform statement March 2, I find only the vaguest hopes and no effective means proposed for wishing "to involve the mass of students in a democratic decision making process." Where

was his mass support for his aims in the potential constituency of some 8,000 students?

In comparison, I find the candidate John Theobald quite specific in his suggestions — he proposes the establishment of a committee involving both students and faculty to draft a new questionnaire in evaluating courses, a credit system for the faculty of arts, a request for greater student representation especially on senate, academic credit for serious non-course activity at York a calling for students to take an active role in supporting the masters of the colleges "to gain some control over the academic life of their students."

Belfont sees the college councils as able to perform "a social function for the students at York University." Is this all the colleges are — a group of councils? He suggests the \$17 the councils get "should be used to promote social functions."

If I were a student, I would question the justification for using so much money for "play" — is Belfont implying that colleges are not to be taken seriously, that they have no concern for activities outside their own social amusement that they couldn't possibly, for instance, be interested in something like the impressive Encounter sessions sponsored by Vanier?

(3) I would ask for an elucidation of the assumption and evidence to support the charges that the board of governors and business interests it represents sees students as

"commodities" and that "their solution is to cut back on the supply of graduates analogous to cutbacks in industrial and plant closures."

The abysmal ignorance displayed by that assumption that the board can "cut back" on enrolment or prevent students from coming, I find incredible from a university student. Enrolments, I always thought, are the result of students and/or parents deciding university education is a good idea.

In relation to the ULS candidate's view of the board, I would ask what homework he has done to support the charge that the "board of governors run (sic) our lives." The board's responsibilities do not extend to academic matters, to curriculum, academic standards, development of academic programs, etc. I should have thought it was in this area that students "live".

The other "causes" supported by the ULS — repeal of anti-abortion laws, an opposition to war in Vietnam and "the immediate withdrawal of all U.S. military forces" — should these be a central activity of the CYSF? Why not individual effort? Women's studies and a demand to end all military and war research on campus must ultimately be the decision of senate. How does the ULS propose to bring these worthy situations into reality? Surely putting their energies into getting a Student Union Building will not help. How will they "involve the mass of students in a democratic decision making process?" Not through pressure from "regular mass student rallies;" not even their "rally" Monday for questioning the

election could be described as a "mass" gathering.

Regarding the ULS proposal for a 24-hour day-care centre at York to be financed by the university, I would ask Belfont if (a) he has costed out such a financial commitment? and if so, (b) what academic or present non-academic expenditures can be sacrificed to implement this activity?

The faculties this year face serious budget cuts from their most trimmed estimates. The amount of money York gets is determined to a large extent by the Ontario government who decides how the tax dollars shall be divided amongst various institutions and provincial services. Does the ULS candidate feel the taxpayer would opt for his proposal?

Looking again at the published statements of the two candidates in the March 2 Excalibur (Pages 8-9), who face a new election, I would ask, if I were a student, who is more likely to devote his time and energies to what concerns me — my education? It would not be the ULS candidate however noble some of his proposals are, some of which I have supported.

Obviously a new election is needed to permit those who feel their cause has been jeopardized by sloppy election procedures to have another hearing. I would hope that the vote would be a "mass" one and that the voters consider what a university is about. It should not be concerned with political power games. Is it not about academic responsibility in the broadest and deepest sense of the word?

Virginia Rock
Master, Stong

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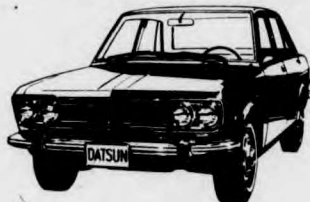
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By IAN NEILL

Drivers: you're lucky too
With spring now here, the pains of winter are now gone. However in contrast with most other people around the world, driving a car in town and out with family and friends can still be a fun thing. In Japan, for instance, even before you can own a car there are problems to overcome. First, you have to get a driver's licence. This entails attending a driving school and the schools are well known for their strict teachers. Compared with tests in North America and Europe, getting a driving licence in Japan is extremely difficult. According to transport regulations, learner-drivers must undergo a minimum of 20 hours practical instruction, and 20 hours learning about traffic laws and the basic structure and performance of cars. But usually, learner-drivers are forced to take from 30 to 40 hours because driving school instructors are so hard to please! If you have ever been to Japan and seen how they drive you'll know why they're called "Kamikaze", which means "divine wind". Taxi drivers may feel that it is their job to drive as fast as they can to earn a good living, but that's not the opinion of many of their fares. This is because there is an increasing awareness of automotive safety right through the various strata of the Japanese people. Recently, daily newspapers have probed the whole problem of defective vehicles and a high-powered road safety campaign was launched. Car owners are very watchful of the condition of their cars. They keep their automobiles in top shape. And, funny thing, you very seldom see a car with a dent on it on the streets. Japanese car owners are very proud of their cars which I guess is a good thing, for our lives really depend on the condition of our personal transport.

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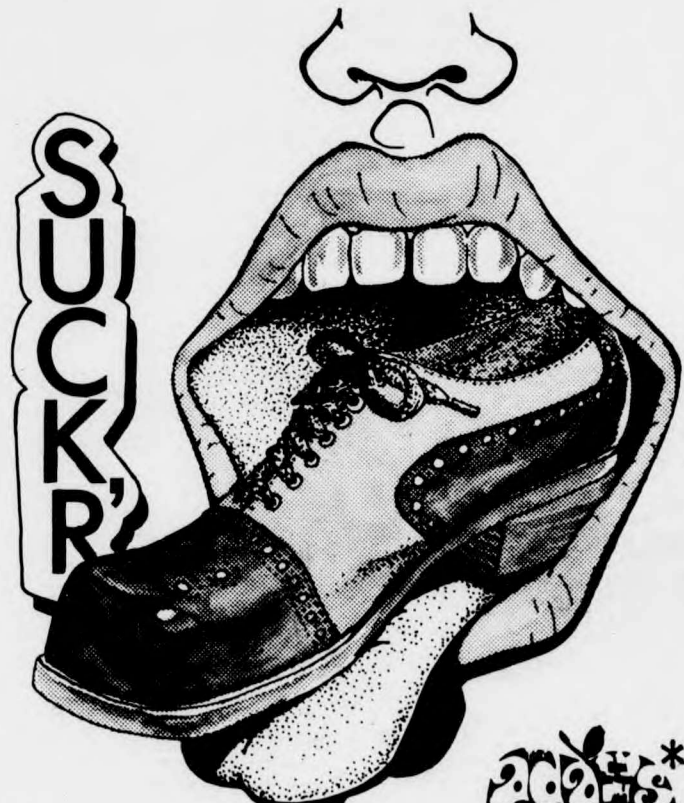
These statistics were reported by Douglas Toms, the new director of the National Highway Safety Bureau of the Department of Transportation. In fact, he said, one manufacturer, GM, told him it knows of no death in an accident below 80 mph in any of its cars in which an occupant was wearing a belt-harness combination.

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