

EDITORIAL

It's time to stand up for Professor Holmes

As an institution of higher education, university is supposed to provide the student with an enriched learning experience. But often it is difficult to establish what exactly this "enriched learning experience" entails. A prominent Stanford academic, William Paisley, once proposed that two kinds of knowledge exist: object knowledge and process knowledge. Currently, the vast majority of students are only exposed to those courses which are object knowledge-based, for students are constantly confronted with the task of absorbing and reproducing information. Rarely do we find a course that forces us to examine our approaches to living and learning, and is truly such an enriching experience. York is fortunate enough to have such a course, and ironically it is under threat of cancellation.

Professor Chris Holmes' courses, "Mystical Psychology and the Psychic Sciences" and "Mystical Views of Consciousness and Creation" offer such a unique process knowledge approach. Holmes provides his students with an insight into mystical teachings which inevitably challenges the student to explore his/her own spirituality. While the notion of spirituality itself will spark controversy, students who disagree are still compelled to refute Holmes' arguments which ultimately forces them to re-evaluate their own values and perceptions. Presently, Holmes' courses are under review by the Senate Subcommittee on Curriculum Review.

To gain even a general understanding of these teachings, a person must sit in on Holmes' course from beginning to end. Such a unique course cannot be judged in a conventional way. And yet, the psychology department persists in examining these courses in exactly this manner. Sitting in on one class can never demonstrate, to those evaluating the course, the impact which Holmes has on his students. Ironically enough, not one member from the subcommittee has made an appearance at his lectures. Yet it is these people who will determine the fate of Holmes and mystical teachings at York University.

That may seem to be an insignificant point to all those students in the dozens of other programmes which the university offers. But that's what's so fascinating about Holmes' teachings. They transcend all disciplines and attract all kinds of students. To learn about Einstein's theory of relativity and the ancient teachings of the Jews, in the *Kabbalah*, is precisely an illustration of this eclecticism. Holmes' courses have nothing and everything to do with psychology, for while they completely ignore the conventional schools they force us to study the most important thing in the world: ourselves.

Holmes' courses are an easy target for any evaluator, for they lack structure and are completely separate in content from the curriculum now offered by the psychology department. But the decision to continue these courses should hardly be based on the nature of their content. Over 27 years ago, when York was created, the University made a commitment to teach alternative views and become a distinct choice for students who wanted something different from the mainstream, which U of T offered.

Today, the York psychology department offers one of the most diverse programmes in North America. To turn their back on Holmes now would be abandoning York's commitment to the unorthodox while losing a great opportunity to ensure that the programme remains unique.

Why do we persist on judging a professor by how much material he/she publishes? What about the great impact which Holmes has on his students? Shouldn't they have a say in the decision too?

Excalibur believes that York students should have a say in the decision of whether or not Professor Holmes' courses should continue to be a part of the York University curriculum. As a result, *Excalibur* is offering students the opportunity to voice their support for Holmes by simply filling out the form below and taking it to our offices or sending it by **internal mail** to 111 Central Square.

I, _____, believe that Professor Holmes' courses and mystical teachings in general should remain a part of the psychology and York University curriculum.

Signature

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LETTERS

We will publish, space permitting, letters under 250 words. They must be typed, triple-spaced, accompanied by writer's name and phone number. We may edit for length. Libellous material will be rejected. Deliver to 111 Central Square during business hours.

Linder letter "chilling"

Dear Editor:

After having read the Liberty Coalition's distorted version of the situation surrounding Ben Linder's murder and their Reagan-rhetoric concerning the political situation in Nicaragua, I felt obliged to try and clear up some of their misperceptions.

First of all, Ben Linder was shot in the head at point blank range by a contra soldier, as he lay wounded after one of their ambushes. The Liberty Coalition (a misnomer if there ever was one) instead chooses to accept media reports distorted by the CIA that cover up the real story behind Ben Linder's death.

Secondly, the Liberty Coalition states that Ben Linder "was never seen without his Soviet AK-47 assault rifle." This statement is completely false. Apparently, the Liberty Coalition chooses to ignore the publicly-distributed photographs of the 27-year-old Linder during his 3½ years in Nicaragua. In these photographs, Linder is dressed as a clown entertaining young children who at all too early an age have been exposed to the horrors of war. Or he is dressed casually working on a project or talking with people. The only weapon he had was an old rifle provided to him for self-defense. It is unfortunate that he did not have this weapon at the time of the contra attack.

And finally, the Liberty Coalition states that Ben Linder "was in Nicaragua to support a Soviet-based dictatorship." In fact, Linder was using his engineering skills to bring electricity to the homes of peasants. He worked for the same peasants who rose up after years of brutal oppression in a popular revolution that overthrew the American-backed dictatorship of Anastasio Somoza in 1979. Under Somoza, a small group

of wealthy people ruled Nicaragua for their personal profit and the profits of American business, against the interests of the impoverished Nicaraguan people. The American government supported this system of oppression and Somoza's brutal dictatorship, which in its last year of rule killed over 50,000 innocent people.

After the 1979 revolution, the Sandinista government distributed land to 100,000 farmers, and organized health care and education programs. Popular democracy exists through neighbourhood committees, unions and organizations who participate in the decision-making process. Sadly these efforts have been hindered by an American-backed war against the people of Nicaragua. The Americans continue this war despite a World Court ruling declaring their actions illegal.

In a chillingly cold conclusion, the Liberty Coalition states that "the death of Ben Linder is just one small step on the road to true freedom for the people of Nicaragua." Since Linder's death was a part of the contra war, which seeks a return to a Somoza-type dictatorship, one can only question the Liberty Coalition's conception of "true freedom."

Brent Patterson

South African holdings small

Editor, Readers of the article in the November 5, 1987 issue of *Excalibur* under the heading of "Divestment" would have a better understanding of the situation by taking note of the following facts:

1. The Board of Trustees of the Pension Plan is not a Committee of the Board of Governors. It has designed responsibilities under the Trust Act of Ontario. It has ten members: three appointed by the Governors, three appointed by the

President of the University and two each appointed by YUFA and YUSA.
 2. Following the March 5, 1986 meeting of the Trustees each Investment Manager (not each Trustee) was requested to give his opinion regarding the impact on his segment of the Pension Fund divestment.
 3. The number of companies with operations in South Africa in which the Pension Fund had holdings as of March 31, 1986 has been reduced by seven.
 4. As of September 30, 1987 Pension Fund holdings in companies with operations in South Africa has been reduced to \$3,700,000, representing only 1.35% of the value of the total Fund of \$275,300,000.

W.W. Small

Secretary, Board of Trustees

Cirak defends theatre policy

Re: "Beckett Theatre plans to censor obscenity" *Excalibur*, November 5, 1987.

We wish to set the record straight in reference to the above article.

The clause in question has been part of our "Terms of Agreement" since it was first drawn up in 1984-85. Your reporter was apprised of this point yet speaks of a "new policy" of censorship. We are merely exercising management rights to view the script for information/logistic purposes!

The reference to the production of "Breasts" was in the context of reactions to the posters advertising the play which brought complaints from not only students, but faculty, staff, C&D and the Womens' Centre.

We support, encourage and stand for creativity. Therefore, rest assured that the Samuel Beckett Theatre will continue to provide "an option to the mainstream theatre offered by the York Theatre Department."

Olga Cirak