

EDITORIAL

Holmes' last round

After a lengthy and turbulent dispute with the Psychology Department, Professor Chris Holmes' courses on mystical psychology have yet to be examined fairly.

Holmes' problems with the University began when he was denied tenure in the Psychology Department in 1983. He immediately filed a grievance against the Administration, claiming that the assessment of his work had been "biased by a basic intolerance within the large psychology department" both against him and his teachings.

But the University stood firm in its position that the decision to deny Holmes tenure was properly taken.

Holmes then battled the University for about three years, and after agreeing to drop his tenure grievance, settled on an agreement between himself, the York University Faculty Association (YUFA), and the University in summer of 1986.

Holmes was given \$95,000 compensation for the two years of employment he lost during the attempted resolution of his grievance, and was appointed course director of eight 3000 level "special topics" courses on mystic studies. The courses, entitled "Mystical Psychology and the Psychic Sciences" and "Mystical Views of Consciousness and Creation," were to be considered for inclusion within the Department of Psychology curriculum, and allowed for Holmes' teaching to be re-evaluated.

Unfortunately for Holmes, last May the Psychology Undergraduate Committee rejected the proposal that his courses be regularized into the psychology curriculum. Holmes was told that his courses were not in the realm of psychology and consequently did not meet a "recognized need" in the Psychology Department's undergraduate programme.

Once again Holmes screamed that his courses were "reviewed in an unfair and prejudiced manner." He stated that a scholarly review of his teachings did not take place and that the Psychology Department had "made a mockery" of the 1986 agreement by violating guarantees of academic freedom — which were supposed to free him from "institutional censorship." Holmes also claimed that several clauses in the agreement outlining how his courses were to be evaluated were ignored.

Holmes' complaints are justified. He has said on several occasions that in order for his courses to be fairly evaluated, a full term of lectures must be attended. However, to his dismay, only one representative of a three-member *ad hoc* committee — established to assess his courses and make a recommendation to the Psychology Undergraduate Committee — attended a half of one of Holmes' lectures during a five-month review process. In addition, members of the Psychology Undergraduate Committee attended between only one and four of Holmes' lectures each.

By being told his courses are not courses in psychology — something with which he vehemently disagrees — isn't Holmes suffering from a form of institutional censorship? Although they are alternative, it would be difficult to argue that Holmes' teachings on self-study, self-realization, spirituality, and consciousness are not topics in psychology.

Holmes taught the last of his eight courses this past fall, but the University has not seen the last of him yet.

Last week Holmes received news that YUFA was renewing its support of his case and that it was drafting a letter in his support and sending it to Paula O'Reilly, York's legal employee relations officer.

Furthermore, the CYSF has formally decided to back Holmes and has already drafted a letter to the Senate Committee on Curriculum and Academic Standards on his behalf.

But Holmes has yet another tough battle ahead of him. Kathryn Koenig, the Chairperson of the Psychology Department, said the Psychology Department went through the ordinary review process and it has not changed its position since May.

And from its perspective, the Psychology Department has little to gain from having Holmes as a faculty member. With no publications in reputable psychology journals or "recognized" presentations on the university circuit, Holmes does little to advance York's Psychology Department's name in the academic community. And how possibly could Holmes' "mystic studies" aid the Department in the general psychology community's quest to be regarded as a science?

This rationale virtually ignores that many students have found great value in his courses. Holmes' tremendous popularity has been demonstrated by overwhelmingly favourable course evaluations, countless letters to the editor in *Excalibur*, and a 1987 *Excalibur* petition that garnered over 1,000 signatures on his behalf. It's unfortunate, though, that Holmes' teaching ability — his greatest strength — will likely not help him very much in his fight with the University. Teaching abilities are not, although they should be, among the top priorities of the Psychology Department.

YUFA's renewed support gives credence to Holmes' claim that the manner in which his courses were reviewed was unfair. Holmes, at this point, just wants a proper evaluation of his courses. Hopefully, for Holmes and his students, the Psychology Department will reconsider its position and grant him this privilege.



Rut? What Rut?

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.

LETTERS

Response inadequate

Dear *Excalibur*,

If Stong College is any indication, dissatisfaction with the University administration is growing among students. Last term, at the rally to protest the administration's decision to close our pubs, Provost Meiningler talked at great length about a new spirit of cooperation and communication between the students and the people they pay to see to the running of this University. Sadly, that has not been the case.

On January 18, 1989, dozens of members of Stong and Bethune colleges were taken seriously ill. Several were hospitalized. Food poisoning was suspected as a possibility. The administration, much to their credit, did three things: they put a doctor on call; they posted notices in the colleges; and they called in the Department of Health.

Then we heard nothing more.

Some questions need to be answered. Why did the administration make no effort to contact commuter students to warn them of the possible risk? Notices are well and good but they must be read to be effective. An off-res student who has trouble getting down the hall to the bathroom is not going to profit much by something posted on campus.

Why did students have to rely on the media to find out how the situation was progressing? The administration was quick enough to contact us at the beginning. Why not an interim report? Worry ran rampant through the residences as the silence continued. And then there appeared the *Toronto Star* article that quoted Dr. Wheeler. Tests weren't back yet but Wheeler was convinced the illness was flu-related. Of course the name of the virus was of "no relevance" to quote the good doctor. One might say that Wheeler is made to look ridiculous because his remarks were taken out of context. If that is the case then why didn't the administration contact the students directly and avoid this problem?

Then there is the whole issue of stool sample kits not reaching affected students promptly because they were delivered to Marriott and not passed on to Stong until Friday. The Stong administrative assistant waited until 5:30 on Thursday to receive them and then left a note asking the kits to be left in a kitchenette where the Resident Tutor could pick them up that evening. Still, the kits didn't reach the college for distribution until the next day. Obvious questions about the validity of the tests must now be answered.

The very fact that these questions exist is proof that the administration did not do all it could to ensure that the needs of the students were met. Considering the gravity of the situa-

tion, it is not too much to ask to be kept informed. Nor is it too much to expect that the testing procedure be carefully supervised to make sure mistakes did not happen. An investigation should be launched into the administration's performance in both these matters. It is time that the people that inhabit the ninth floor of the Ross Building be made to realize that they are accountable to the students. To us.

Sincerely,
Michael Stokes
Don, Stong College

Angry food customers

Dear *Excalibur*,

A recent Wednesday evening (Jan. 18) at Stong Residence, at least 70 students became violently ill over the course of a few hours. The washrooms were, at times, literally jammed with vomiting people. The line of shoe-soles pointed toes-down under the stall doors made for an unforgettable image.

At least four students were hospitalized.

At first we strongly suspected food poisoning. Botulism, however, is not the crux of my argument, serious as it is.

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