

Editorial

No Surprises

There is something particularly gratifying about predicting problems that eventually do arise; a smug 'I told you so' attitude that is hard to resist.

So it was with less than shock and concern that we learned this week that Lyceum, the Council of the York Student Federation's latest venture into high finance, has lost money consistently since September.

Lyceum's operations have always been hard for us to understand. Weeks after opening its doors, its shelves were stocked with an inordinate amount of religious tracts (of the sort that Billy Graham or Jerry Falwell might approve). When its manager began to feel (as we did) that there was something odd about having so many of them there, it was clear that something had to change. As fate would have it, it was he, and not the books.

Since that time, the operations of the bookstore have been shrouded in secrecy. The Council has, until recently, refused to release any information about the bookstore's finances, and our inquiries were greeted by enthusiastic, encouraging responses. 'The bookstore,' a typical reply might go, 'is really shaping up. This is the best month ever.'

We never really believed those answers. Now though, we find that indeed it might have been the bookstore's best month at the

time, but it could not have been a good one.

Overstaffed, overpriced and so under-used, Lyceum has been a bomb ever since *Excalibur's* office space was cut into to make room for it.

The secrecy surrounding the store even extended to the Council's auditors, MacGillvray and Co. A spokesman for the company told *Excalibur* that Lyceum's accounts were in such "god-awful shape" that a proper audit could not be done with the information provided.

The performance of the enterprise would provide a good case study for York MBA students. In fact, first year economics students would have a field day pointing out all the major errors committed by Lyceum. It would be laughable if it were not our money that was going down the drain.

Financial reports show that Lyceum was paying more in salaries than it was taking in as its total revenue. It would have been more financially responsible if Lyceum had shut down and only had to shell out its fixed costs.

The cost to York students was great for the experiment of running a failing business. Lyceum displayed no imagination whatsoever and refused to advertise their wares. Perhaps with the pitiful selection of books, the no advertising strategy was a good one.

Lyceum's most dramatic

marketing move was to enter the poster market. Following a month or so of making money, the poster department joined the book section as a money loser.

Meanwhile, the most obvious step was never taken.

It is difficult to fathom how previous Lyceum managers neglected to enter the lucrative textbook market. Every fall, the CYSF executive complains about the "outrageous" prices at the York Bookstore across the hall from Lyceum.

Interim Lyceum manager John Watson complains that it would be too big a job to check with every professor to see what texts would be used for every course. That's right, but no one expects Lyceum to do that.

The most prudent course would be for Lyceum to purchase the texts from the most popular courses, such as introductory economics or psychology. Then the business could advertise the texts available, the price and the savings from the bookstore across the hall.

For better or worse, CYSF is committed to keeping Lyceum afloat for at least another year. We hope that the new student government will abandon the philosophy that it is good to operate a business which loses money by the bucketful with no apparent benefits.

Undoubtedly, we will be commenting on the performance of Lyceum next year. Excuse us if our cynicism persists.



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Interested members of the community are requested to send their letters of application along with a short resume to:

Reza Alavie
President
Winters College Council
Room 329, Winters Residence
York University

The deadline date for submitting applications is Thursday, April 16, 1981.