

Excalibur

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

You don't know what you've got till it's gone

Ah, the joys of spending other people's money.

"With only the vague guiding principle of "the public good" hanging over them, a den of elected officials can growl at, stumble over and paw through thousands of the electorate's dollars for hours on end, exercising only their collective imaginations.

And since the voters rarely remember the funds collected so anonymously, few will raise their voice if they get at least a turtle race, two guest speakers on the crocodiles of Peru and the right to form a Flat Earth society for their money.

At York, the situation is further blurred. Students absently pay their fees to the university, forgetting that roughly \$17 and \$10 respectively find their way into college and university council coffers. And the various councils, in a manner befitting their mutual spirit of co-operation, leave each other the task of throwing ever-popular pumpkin hunts while they deal with more serious matters — like attending finance committee meetings to decide where to spend council funds.

In CYSF's case, the matter is admirably solved. When in doubt, keep the cash at home. Of their \$80,300 preliminary budget, due for acceptance or rejection at Monday's Budget Council meeting, \$10,000 has been turned in to the university to cover past debts. Presumably, for pumpkin hunts that didn't make it.

Of the remaining fortune, the president receives \$5,000 to do what presidents do. Mike Mouritsen increased his salary by \$1,000 over John Theobald's salary last year, but that's only a 25 per cent increase. And after all, the cost of living has risen 10 per cent.

The business manager and secretary share a further \$13,450, and the part-time help receives \$300. Honoraria, a nice Latin term which covers officials who couldn't quite get elected, remove \$750. And fringe benefits, like removing

tarnish on the silverware and touching up the monograms on the curtains, take up another \$1,200.

That's \$20,700 in salaries, but somebody has to lick the \$1,500 worth of postage stamps.

Moving into office expenses — which is comparable to driving into the fog on the 401 near Cornwall — we come to statistics and supplies, duplicating and advertising, for a modest \$4,500. Publishing the Manus handbook will probably break even, but \$200 is on hand just in case the people who placed the ads ever get a look at what they were paying for.

Long distance phone calls and installation ring up \$2,500, but the University of Hawaii has its problems too, and it pays to keep in touch.

Then of course there's \$1,000 for elections of new officials, and \$1,200 for legal and audit expenses to make sure no-one has been cooking the books. After the fact, anyway.

We will leave the \$2,000 item for "move and renovations" for a future paragraph, along with the \$4,000 tag for "course evaluation".

The student societies undoubtedly need the \$1,800 budgeted to them, if only to bribe students from the various departments to run for seats in the societies. A tidy \$1,000 will help to bring in a guest speaker from the Scottish Nationalist Party to speak on oil deposits in the North Sea.

External affairs has asked for \$1,000 for conferences and \$2,000 for membership, presumably in the Ontario Federation of Students. Which should take care of the conference budget. (How much is pizza this year?)

The clubs on campus are awarded \$2,500, and considering that if they were lined up alphabetically from the Aardvark Lovers Association to the Zither Appreciation Class, York might have a fair hand-to-hand means of dousing forest fires in the Okefenokee Swamp in

Georgia, this might work out to 50 cents a club.

Special events will eat up \$5,000 under social and cultural affairs — expect a bandshell featuring Esmonde Black and his Oakville Aces, with Tommy Latulip on shoe-horn. Unforeseen and unprovided items will draw from a \$900 contingency fund — but with the way incorporation fees are going, it's not so unforeseen, even if it may end up unprovided.

That, except for the communications items, about wraps it up. Under communications, Manus gets \$500 (but then the \$200 for publications is just hanging around for anyone to . . . oh my . . .) and Radio York gets \$5,000. If you see a funny brown box hanging on the wall of your common room, try twisting the knob. That classical music (" . . . and here's the flip side of a hot tune by the Biscuits . . .") is worth its weight in gold.

And now, as they say, for the clincher. Excalibur has been granted \$13,000. Excalibur costs \$66,540 to publish. Most of the money comes from advertising, but the minimum grant we can survive with is \$18,000.

Over the past years, Excalibur has been receiving a steadily decreasing CYSF grant, and has had to make up this deficit by soliciting more ads.

Most obviously, this has meant that advertisements have been steadily creeping up the pages to a point where they occupy more than a third of the paper's surface.

Less obviously, this means that Excalibur must, like Alice and the Red Queen, keep rushing very fast to stay in the same place. There is no opportunity for growth, and the opposite of growth is stagnation.

Even with the full \$18,000 grant, Excalibur will be treading water. With

the threatened \$13,000, by Christmas time we will be little bubbles rising from the water's surface.

And now we will draw in those two items left hanging from the CYSF budget.

The "move and renovations" item of \$2,000 was planned to cover expenses of a move of the CYSF offices to the Excalibur offices — i.e. from N111 Ross to 111 Central Square — with the resultant displacement of Excalibur, staff and lumbering typewriters.

This move will not occur in the near future, if at all. CYSF has been unable to promise acceptable accommodations elsewhere for Excalibur's darkroom and office space. And if and when they agreed to such an arrangement, their costs would rise far higher than \$2,000.

Which effectively means that the \$2,000 could be effortlessly trimmed from the CYSF budget.

As for the \$4,000 course evaluation item, anyone who peeked at the course evaluation book turned out by CYSF can vouch that it was a total waste of time and money. Five students filling in a questionnaire cannot give a fair critique of one course. Many who used the book were disappointed, and at a CYSF meeting last winter, the entire notion of having a course evaluation in the future was dismissed.

Which, without new arguments for the defense, might be a legitimate expense to cut out, leaving \$4,000 hanging unused in the budget.

After paying off the debt to York, CYSF has budgeted to spend almost half its funds on salaries and office supplies — spending a dollar to spend a dollar, you might say.

The CYSF Budget Council is voting on the budget in the Senate Chambers Monday night.

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Enrolment — the old soft sell.