

# Your Student Council tells all

*This space is devoted to conveying to you the current activities and personalities of the York Student Council; this kind of communication is part of our attempt to bridge the apparent gap between the business that we are involved in and the awareness of the York community concerning that business.*

It is our intention to provide for a more immediate and spontaneous response on your part to the issues which confront us, and you cannot do that if you are not aware of which they are. In this connection, we are interested in constructive suggestions which may be made to your council representatives or sent to the speaker of the council.

For openers, here are some of the items which were on this week's agenda, (council meetings are held every other Tuesday night, the latest one having taken place this week; these are, of course open to any member of the community whose presence and opinions will be gratefully received). Reports on various items such as the past elections to our council, McLaughlin College, the OUS fall conference, the new university athletic Committee; consideration of the ways in which we can communicate better with you, of students on Administrative committees, of Glendon Council's request for reciprocal observer status on YSC, of Modes 171, of financing a Treasure Van, of the holding of a Variety Night for the United Appeals, and of two other items, the ABC programme, and our Draft Policy Statement.

## ABC PROGRAMME

This programme, run by Marshall Green and Gerry Blair, has received enough publicity that most of you will know that it is an attempt to provide further learning experience, hopefully of a university style, for high-school-age kids who are fed up with the quality of their current educational situation. The first seminar-style sessions were held on Monday, including a group at the Clarke Institute. While it is too early to report much, the concept appears to have a good chance of succeeding, if certain transport difficulties are cleared up. We are at present working with a small number of students, 50-60, in small seminars, in the manner of a pilot project, but the indicated interest of many many more of these people dictates that a major expansion is possible should this thing work. It is a tribute to this community that without any real searching out of volunteers, we have more than a hundred names of York students who want to involve themselves. Further reports will follow as the programme proceeds.

YSC is currently considering a policy statement which concerns itself with what a university and a university education should be, and which leads into discussion of student-centred teaching, the existence of a Senate as presently constituted, and

the abolition of vestiges of what we call social inequality on campus, such as separate washrooms and parking facilities, tuition fees, and the possible misuse of the grading system. We have been searching for student opinions on these issues through open meetings and interest has been somewhat disappointing. In this connection, there will be a Public Forum in the McLaughlin Social and Debates Room Fri. Nov. 1, at 1 p.m.

Some time ago, we asked for all organizations which needed financial assistance to present their needs to us, in order that we might try to help. We appreciate that a club cannot go on until they know whether money is forthcoming, and we are trying to resolve the problem as quickly as possible, but time is required; the problem is that we have \$8,000 budgeted for this assistance, we received requests for \$26,000, and the resolution of these two figures is appropriately difficult. Please hang on.

Finally, there are a couple of announcements. The Council is now accepting applications for the position of Student Housing Co-ordinator to locate and place students in low-cost, off-campus housing. Previous experience is required. Applications should be made in writing to, Marshall Green, York Student Council, Room A-11, Temporary Office Building by no later than Nov. 4.

Application deadline for position of YEARBOOK EDITOR is Nov. 4. Applications should be made in writing to:

The Communications Commission  
York Student Council  
Room A-11, Temporary Office Building

A resume of previous experience is required.

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A forum for comment and reaction. Excalibur will accept columns, comments, and cartoons from any member of the university.

## Student Senator's report

by David King  
Student Senator

The Oct. 24 meeting of the York University Senate was, needless to say, a momentous one. By a motion which eventually passed with only four dissenting votes (approximately 65 members were present) the senate declared its meetings henceforth to be open to all members of York University.

Most of the time at the meeting was in fact consumed by an intensive debate of a prior motion of the Senate approving the opening of meetings of the faculty council of Glendon College. The original motion opposed by Principal Reid was amended twice prior to its final approval. One amendment limited attendance at the meetings to members of the college or accredited representatives of the public press (the original intention of the council has been to open its meetings to virtually anybody); the other required that the changes be considered an experiment, to be re-evaluated in one

year's time.

Limitations of space preclude a report of other business (mostly routine) discussed at the meeting, nor can I fulfill the promise made in my previous article to delineate the roles and functions of Senate's committees.

It would seem appropriate for me to comment however on the potential significance of open Senate meetings to York University. Philosophically speaking, the issue is of course a matter of principle; the desirability of openness of decision-making is unquestioned in the democratic society but hopefully the opening of the Senate means more than that.

Hopefully, it means that a large step has been taken towards the creation of an atmosphere of involvement at this University — an atmosphere which may not only ease student frustrations at the impersonality of university government, but may also contribute to a developing sense of community among all members of York University.



## So what's a university, who runs it, and how?

A university is a community, but it is a community of a special kind — a community devoted to inquiry. It exists so that its members may inquire into truths of all sorts. Its presence marks our commitment to the idea that somewhere in society there must be an organization in which anything can be studied or questioned — not merely safe and established things but difficult and inflammatory things, the most troublesome questions of politics and war, of sex and morals, of property and national loyalty.

It is governed by the ideal of academic freedom, applicable both to faculty and students. The ideal of academic freedom does indeed put extraordinary demands upon human restraint and upon our capacity for disinterested thought. Yet these demands are really of the same general order as those we regard as essential to any advanced civilization. The very possibility of civilized human discourse rests upon the willingness of people to consider that they may be mistaken. The possibility of modern democracy rests upon the willingness of governments to accept the existence of a loyal opposition, organized to reverse some of their policies and to replace them in office. Similarly, the possibility of the modern free university rests upon the willingness of society to support and sustain institutions part of whose business it is to examine, critically and without stint, the assumptions that prevail in that society. Professors are hired to teach and students are sent to learn with the quite explicit understanding that they are not required to agree with those who hire or send them.

Underlying these remarkable commitments is the belief that in the long run the university will best minister to society's needs not alone through its mundane services but through the far more important office of becoming an intellectual and spiritual balance wheel. This is a very demanding idea, an idea of tremendous sophistication, and it is hardly surprising that we have some trouble in getting it fully accepted by society or in living up to it ourselves. But just because it is demanding we

should never grow tired of explaining or trying to realize it. Nor should we too quickly become impatient with those who do not immediately grasp it.

We are very much impressed now not simply by the special character of the free university but also by its fragility. The delicate thing about freedom is that while it requires restraints, it also requires that these restraints normally be self-imposed, and not forced from outside. The delicate thing about the university is that it has a mixed character, that it is suspended between its position in the external world, with all its corruption and evils and cruelties, and the splendid world of our imagination. The university does in fact perform certain mundane services of instruction and information to society — and there are those who think it should aspire to nothing more. It does in fact constitute a kind of free forum — and there are those who want to convert it primarily into a center of political action. But above these aspects of its existence stands its essential character as a center of free inquiry and criticism — a thing not to be sacrificed for anything else.

A university is not a service station. Neither is it a political society, nor a meeting place for political societies. With all its limitations and failures, and they are invariably many, it is the best and most benign side of our society insofar as that society aims to cherish the human mind. To realize its essential character, the university has to be dependent upon something less precarious than the momentary balance of forces in society. It has to pin its faith on something that is not hard-boiled or self-regarding. It has to call not merely upon critical intelligence but upon self-criticism and self-restraint. There is no group of professors or administrators, of alumni or students, there is no class or interest in our society that should consider itself exempt from exercising the self-restraint or displaying the generosity that is necessary for the university's support.

Some people argue that because the modern university, whether public or private, is supported by and is part of the larger society, it therefore shares in all the

evils of society, and must be quite ruthlessly revolutionized as a necessary step in social reform, or even in social revolution.

That universities do share in, and may even at some times and in some respects propagate, certain ills of our society seems to me undeniable. But to imagine that the best way to change a social order is to start by assaulting its most accessible centers of thought and study and criticism is not only to show a complete disregard for the intrinsic character of the university but also to develop a curiously self-destructive strategy for social change. If an attempt is made to politicize completely our primary centers of free argument and inquiry, they will only in the end be forced to lose their character and be reduced to centers of vocational training, nothing more. Total and pure neutrality for the university is in fact impossible, but neutrality should continue to define our aim, and we should resist the demand that the university espouse the political commitments of any of its members. This means, too, that the university should be extraordinarily chary of the relationships that even suggest such a political commitment.

The university is the only great organization in modern society that considers itself obliged not just to tolerate but even to give facilities and protection to the very persons who are challenging its own rules, procedures and policies. To subvert such a fragile structure is all too easy, as we now know. That is why it requires, far more than does our political society, a scrupulous and continued dedication to the conditions of orderly and peaceable discussion. The technique of the forceable occupation and closure of a university's buildings with the intention of bringing its activities to a halt is no ordinary bargaining device — it is a thrust at the vitals of university life. It is a powerful device for control by a determined minority, and its continued use would be fatal to any university. In the next few years the universities of this country will have to find the effective strategy to cope with it, and to distinguish it sharply and permanently from the many devices of legitimate student petition, demonstration and protest.