

# Methinks Harry doth protest too much...

If you haven't read this letter, you probably weren't on campus in April. York President Harry Arthurs fired it off as a response to *Excilbur's* April 2 profile of vice president Stephen Fienberg, who was then one of three candidates competing to replace Arthurs. The disgruntled president printed thousands of copies of the three-page letter, dumped them all over campus and mailed them to the media. The letter is worth reading carefully because the president ends up revealing more than he denies — and because it shows how he deals with criticism. Here, *Excilbur's* Features Editor Doug Saunders gives you a guided tour of Arthurs' letter.

Office of the President



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•Why start with space lasers? Compared to the matter at hand, Star Wars research is a side issue, a bit player with a couple cameo appearances — and none of them on the York campus. These "false allegations" were never made by *Excilbur* — and, to the best of our knowledge, not by anyone else, either (although both the Canadian Peace Alliance and the Ontario Federation of Labour have recently asked questions about SDI research at York — a perfectly valid thing to do, as we shall soon see).

•Arthurs tries to get the upper hand by writing his entire letter in the passive voice ("it is alleged"), so he can avoid saying just who is doing all this alleging. What *Excilbur* did allege was that Fienberg is a big fan of closer ties between private industry and the university, and doesn't particularly care if that industry is military-related. As for Star Wars research, it came up only in relation to his previous experience in the United States. So why is Arthurs so eager to clear the record on Star Wars?

•Maybe this is why. It's true, as Arthurs says, that the Senate voted in 1986 to ban SDI research on the York campus. But it's also true that in 1987 the SDI Office in Washington reported a subcontract conducted on the York campus — a year after the Senate ban.

•Still, Arthurs is wise to focus on SDI research — a useful 'decoy' issue, convenient for promoting York's squeaky-clean reputation and drawing the reader's attention away from that enormous heap of military research staring everyone in the face. According to the March *Ploughshares Bulletin*, York ranks number one among Canadian universities in terms of Pentagon research dollars. Out of \$960,270 reported by the Pentagon for research contracts at Canadian universities, York grabbed \$711,610. In terms of overall defence research, York ranked number three among Canadian universities — quite an achievement for a university with a relatively small science faculty.

•The Institute for Space and Terrestrial Science (ISTS) is committed to any kind of research that will help its member companies make a profit. That's the purpose of ISTS, the reason why the Ontario government has spent millions to put this "centre of excellence" on the York campus. Nobody at ISTS will deny that much of their research is military-funded — as aerospace contractor Peter Mueller says, "you just can't separate the two so easily" — and, in light of the fact that a reported 75 to 80 per cent of NASA's work is military-related, the very term "peaceful uses of space" looks like an oxymoron.

•Here, Arthurs could only be referring to the April 2 *Excilbur* article. But we never said Fienberg had "a major role" in SEI coming to Carnegie Mellon — merely that he thought it was a great idea. We attended a symposium where Fienberg extolled the virtues of SEI, and he very clearly said it was an "ideal model" for York. Arthurs has one thing right here: SEI does indeed create software for secret military projects.

•Sure, Fienberg thinks the "intellectual property and other financial and administrative concerns" were "properly addressed" between Carnegie Mellon and SEI. And here's what Carnegie Mellon got: a \$103 million research institute which is effectively co-run by the Pentagon. The US Department of defence is allowed to reserve a percentage of the Institute's research projects and declare them classified. Much of the information produced there will never be seen by other scientists; in some cases, the public can't even know what the projects are. As Arthurs says, Fienberg thinks York "would be well advised to do likewise" — and that's the problem with Fienberg.

•A few days after this letter was printed, Fienberg was removed from the list of candidates after the York senate declined to endorse him. This wasn't due to any of the conspiracy theories Arthurs throws around here — it was because of Fienberg's policies and opinions. A businesslike, bottom-line administrator, he is an efficient budget cutter and a proponent of closer ties between industry and the university. Most Board of Governors members, themselves corporate executives, tend to agree with Fienberg on this — but faculty members don't. That was all *Excilbur* argued, and that was all it took to convince the Senate that Fienberg isn't the right president for York. As a result, Susan Mann is the new president — and we have our open selection process to thank for this.

## Statement by President Harry Arthurs concerning false allegations of involvement of York University and of Vice President Stephen Fienberg in Star Wars research

April 8, 1992

Several students and professors, a student newspaper, and the Canadian Peace Alliance have made a series of false statements concerning York University and Stephen Fienberg, one of the candidates now seeking its presidency. The University believes that fair-minded people — including most members of the York community and the peace movement — will wish to have the facts at their disposal, in order to make an informed judgment concerning these totally false allegations.

The following represents my best knowledge and complete disclosure of all the facts at my disposal.

1. It is alleged that York is seeking to become part of the Strategic Defence Initiative of the US Defence Department.

This is false.

York's Senate resolved that no SDI research should be done on its campus, and requested the administration not to administer SDI funds. On behalf of the administration, I agreed. This has been York's policy since June 26, 1986, and continues to be our policy today. To the best of my knowledge, no classified military research is done at York.

2. It is alleged that York supports a bid to bring the International Space University to its campus, so that the ISU — and York, its host — will become a "major part of the entire Star Wars research complex," since ISU is allegedly controlled by a US board dominated by defence-related contractors.

This is false several times over.

York is supporting a bid by ISTS and the government of Ontario to bring the ISU to our campus. ISTS — an Ontario Centre of Excellence in Space Research and a consortium of universities and private sector firms — is committed to research only into peaceful uses of space, and has in fact confined itself to such research. Its bid for the ISU is supported by the Government of Ontario and is in competition with bids from Quebec, France, Italy and Japan. If the ISTS bid is successful, the terms of ISU's association with York will have to be negotiated and approved by the Ontario government and by York's Senate and Board.

The ISU is not now and will not be the sort of institution alleged. Founded by several students, it has operated as a peripatetic summer school meeting at various sites in several countries, including MIT, and, in 1990, the York campus. Its student body, staff and administration are international, and have been drawn from countries in the industrialized west, in the former socialist bloc (prior to dissolution), and in the third world (including India, China and several African states). A list of its board of directors and advisory board no doubt includes some representatives of US firms which do SDI research, but these are outnumbered by far larger representation from other countries and other fields of activity, especially academic research.

The International Space University has explicitly committed itself to "focus on projects meant to utilize resources and energy of the solar system to protect and preserve life on Earth, and to explore and examine the depths of the cosmos." Given this commitment, "as an international, non-profit, non-governmental organization devoted to world cooperation in space" [the ISU, according to its charter] "cannot be interlinked with any form of national political organization, political party or military project." No departure from these principles has been alleged or observed, none is anticipated, nor would any be tolerated, so far as York is concerned.

3. It is alleged that York's Vice President, Stephen Fienberg, is the chosen instrument of the Board of Governors to achieve this goal. Dr. Fienberg is alleged to have had "a major role" in turning Carnegie Mellon University into a major US defence contractor and in having the university "become home to the Software Education Institute (SEI)" which creates software for secret military projects. He is also alleged to have said that SEI is an "ideal model" for York to follow.

False again. And willfully misleading.

Dr. Fienberg is a distinguished statistician, who served as Dean of Humanities and Social Sciences at Carnegie Mellon, prior to joining York, and returning to Toronto, of which he is a native. When the plans were developed for SEI to come to Carnegie Mellon, he was on leave and away from the campus. Subsequently, as Dean of Humanities and Social Sciences, he was responsible for a collection of academic units which had nothing to do with SDI or similar research.

His contact with SEI was to serve as a member of an advisory panel for a research program which was funded with SEI funds. This project related to software quality control, and was non-military, scholarly, and open. Dr. Fienberg never sought and does not possess security clearance in the United States.

He did not advocate SEI as an "Ideal Model" for York. He said that Carnegie Mellon had properly addressed intellectual property and other financial and administrative concerns prior to entering into an agreement with SEI, and that if York intended to bring outside research agencies onto campus, it would be well advised to do likewise.

4. Dr. Fienberg's appointment as Vice President is alleged to be "part of a push to have ISU brought to York," and the presidential selection process is alleged to have been secret and gerrymandered to ensure his selection as president for which he is alleged to be "definitely slated."

False, and not only misleading but clearly malicious.

The ISU bid was conceived in 1990 and was being pursued by ISTS, not York. Stephen Fienberg was selected by me as Vice President in the spring of 1991, on the recommendation of a search committee which comprised a number of senior academics and another vice president. His appointment was subsequently approved by the Board of Governors, on my recommendation. The Board had never heard his name prior to my proposing it. Neither I nor they raised the issue of Star Wars or other military research since there was nothing in his resume (or in fact) to indicate his involvement in such research, and the issue of ISU was not discussed with him by me, or so far as I know, by anyone else.

The presidential search process at York is conducted by a joint Board-Senate committee, according to rules which were agreed upon in 1984 by the two bodies. It is a very open process, much more so than that of almost any other Canadian university, and so much so that most candidates with other university affiliations have refused to allow their names to stand. Dr. Fienberg's candidacy — so far as I know, I am not directly involved — was subject to the standard procedures used for other candidates.

As of this date, the outcome of the search is not known and according to most observers, is completely unpredictable.

These allegations are devoid of truth, or the semblance of truth. Whether they were circulated in ignorance or in bad faith, their authors owe an apology to York University, to the ISU, and to Stephen Fienberg. They will do the cause of peace a great service if they show that they are honest enough to provide that apology.