

Revoking Church's seat is a justified response

"While we regret the Interfaith Council decision, we recognize our strong commitment to the bible that puts us at odds with a council of numerous religious groups, yet at the same time discourages discussion on matters of doctrine . . . We believe it is our right and freedom to speak out and stand up for the teachings of the bible, while respecting the rights of every individual."

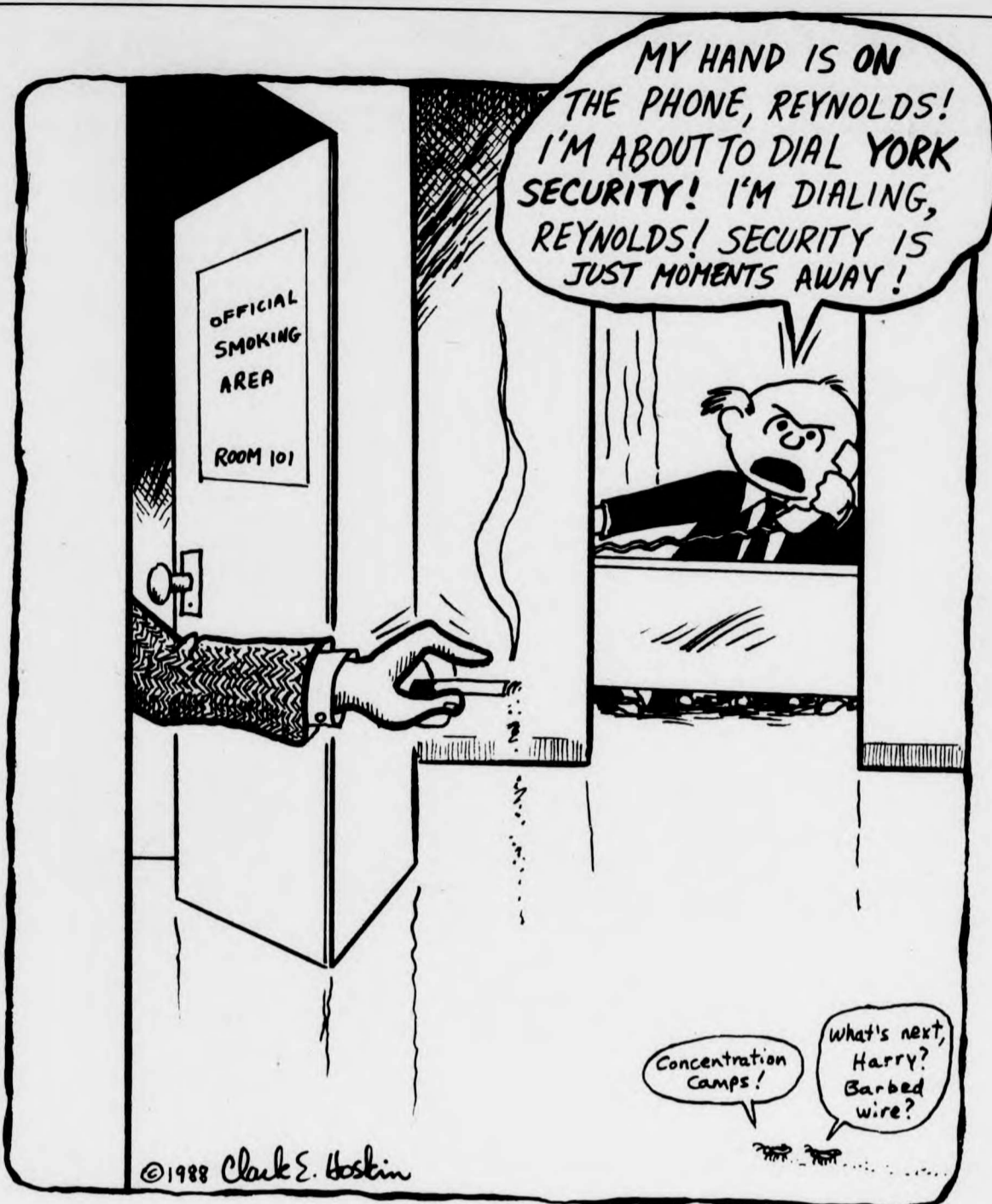
This was the reaction of Toronto Central Church of Christ evangelist Mark Mancini after the York Interfaith Council (IFC) decided to revoke the group's membership at a meeting two weeks ago. In a strongly-worked motion passed by a vote of 17-2 (the two votes against were both from Church members), the IFC openly condemned the group for using cultic practices to attract members and keep its membership in line. According to the motion, the Church uses "coercive, manipulative, and harassing methods of recruiting, and . . . continually breached student confidentiality." The motion also accuses the Church of failing to "respect the rights of other groups . . . and promoting a peaceful harmonious co-existence at York."

These are strong accusations, but based on what foundations? At the meeting, over 25 people who were previously affiliated with the group told about their experiences and how they felt about the Church. According to Rayzel Robinson, who was representing the Jewish Students Federation at the meeting, "I heard the emotional responses from quite a varied number of students who had been affected by this group. These students were messed up in a variety of ways, feeling isolated, lonely and withdrawn . . . something was just not right with the group." Mina Valami, who represented the Ismaili Students Association, echoed Robinson's sentiments, saying there was more than enough evidence to justify the IFC's motion.

Many people are unaware of the controversy surrounding the Church and its practices. Yet one really begins to understand the sentiments expressed by the motion after one listens to an ex-member's testimony. To say the least, their tales are compelling. Hatsuo Yamamoto was one of the York students to testify at the IFC meeting. He joined the Church in September after his interest in religion and the bible was rekindled by a friend he met in Quebec on a bilingual programme. Yamamoto's involvement in the Church seemed to begin almost by chance. After an innocent invitation to a volleyball game by Church member Mathew Levy, Yamamoto started attending bible discussions, and slowly the Church began consuming more and more of Yamamoto's time. There were four Church night meetings a week which forced Yamamoto to withdraw from his intramural ice hockey team. And even though he tried to stay in touch with his other friends, Levy would constantly tell him that such friendships would "weaken him spiritually." On top of that, the Church also advised Yamamoto not to attend other religious group meetings unless he was accompanied by a "brother," making it difficult for him to keep in touch with his friends in the Navigators. "They also told me that I might have to leave my family if they have conflicting points of view," says Yamamoto.

By the end of October, Yamamoto had finally given in to the Church's pressure, and was baptized. After that, the demands on Yamamoto's time and commitment to the group increased. Yamamoto, a flautist in the York music programme, was expected to leave music practices early so he could make Church meetings. "I was told that these were all sacrifices that I had to make for god, but it was more for the Church," explains Yamamoto. At the meetings, Yamamoto says, there are weekly scripture and lessons which one must memorize and learn, and at the end of the school term, there's even an exam. For Yamamoto, the kind of commitment the group demanded infringed too much on his time, and prevented him from keeping his friends.

Moreover, Yamamoto resented the intolerance which the Church seemed to have for other religious groups. It's ironic that Mancini accuses the IFC of being unwilling to discuss matters of doctrine when so many ex-members say that the Church openly discouraged any association with other religious groups and the questioning of Church doctrine. And while Yamamoto does point out that the Church did help him in some respects, his story speaks for itself. And so do the testimonies of other ex-members, which clearly justify the IFC's strong condemnation of the Church.



LETTERS

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.

Pay inequity still a big problem

Letter to the Editor:

I was delighted to see the write-up in the Feb. 11 *Excalibur* of the upcoming events on the feminization of poverty organized by the Women's Studies Program (Arts) and Founders College. I want, however, to correct one small error. We are not using the events to fundraise money. On the contrary, we had a successful fundraising campaign to pay for these events. We have received generous support from the Atkinson College Students Association; Canadian Union of Educational Workers (CUEW), Local 3; CUEW-Women's Caucus, Local 3; CYSE; Dept. of Social Work (Atkinson); Faculty of Arts; Faculty of Education; Faculty of Environmental Studies; Faculty of Graduate Studies; McLaughlin College; Office of the President; Office of the Provost; Osgoode Hall Law School; Retirement Centre; Stong College; Women's Studies Program (Atkinson); York University Faculty Association; York University Staff Association; and the York Women's Centre.

As a result of this support, participating in The Poverty Game will cost only \$5 instead of the regular charge of \$30. We are also able to offer child care subsidies to those who need them. I might also take this opportunity to remind your readers that the premiere of the new NFB film on the feminization of poverty, called *No Way Not Me*, will be held on Tues. March 1 from 4-6 in Moot Court at Osgoode Hall. The director and producer will be present and the discussion with them will be followed by a reception. The event is open to all and free of charge.

One final note. These events seem even more timely after I read your

cover story on the Osgoode cafeteria. The fact that the women who work at the cafeteria were expected to take a cut in pay as a result of a change in contractors reflects a serious weakness in current labour legislation. "Contracting out," used to lower wages, often of women who work as cleaners or in cafeterias (and as a strategy to break unions of The Post Office) is a contributor to the feminization of poverty. Women who only earn around 60% of the average male wage are faced with further wage cuts, sometimes after years of slow pay increases which have taken them only marginally over the minimum wage. For example, your story tells of Rosa, an employee of 17 years, who was earning \$8 an hour and was forced to take a \$2-\$2.50 cut in hourly pay. If the university is serious about its commitment to being an equal opportunity employer, it should protect its employees from lowered wages as a result of new contracting arrangements.

Linda Briskin

Women praise sports coverage(?)

Editor,
On behalf of the Women's Athletic Council and the female varsity athletes, I would like to thank you for the excellent coverage women's athletics has received this year. It is so refreshing to be writing a letter of praise rather than a letter begging for more exposure. As we all know the calibre of women's sports at the University level is outstanding. The Women's Athletic Council works hard to promote women's athletics on campus and your assistance is greatly appreciated.

Yours In Sport,
Tracey McCague
President,
Women's Athletic Council

YAD challenges Winters to vote

Mr. Stephen Reid, Winters College Council, finds it "offensive" for the campus coalition against the Mulroney-Reagan trade deal (York Against the Deal) to accuse the Mulroney government of "using dictatorial methods of ramming through a deal."

He suggests that we in YAD are using "scare tactics" and challenges us to "bring another group, those for the agreement" with us when we speak to groups around the university.

I accept your challenge, Mr. Reid. We would love to debate you or anyone else who supports the trade deal in a public forum if you and Winters College Council will set one up. You can contact YAD by phoning me at my campus phone (#4607) or leave a message on my machine (530-0341). Or you can send a note through campus mail c/o CUEW, local 3, West Office Building.

And just to make the debate more interesting, how about some real stakes? Why doesn't Winters College Council also agree to organize a referendum of Winters College students on two questions after everyone has been exposed to both sides in the debate: (1) Regardless of your views on free trade, do you think this is a bad deal? (2) Do you think that there should be a federal election before the trade deal goes into effect?

If there are people from other college councils reading this letter I issue the same challenge to you. The trade deal is going to have a profound effect on your future. You owe it to yourself to ensure that all students know exactly what it is going to do to their lives. Phone us.

John Cleveland
York Against the Deal

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EDITORIAL: 736-5239
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MAILING ADDRESS:
Room 111, Central Square
York University
4700 Keele Street
Downsview M3J 1P3