

Excalibur

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

Presidents' report: dangerously influential

Last week the Committee of Presidents of Universities of Ontario unveiled its game plan for handling future campus protest in this province.

Although it was reported that the guidelines in the working paper "represent neither the policy of that committee nor of any individual university," it was in fact the presidents of Ontario's 14 provincially-assisted universities who approved Order On Campus for release.

It seems pretty clear then that even if the working paper is not formal policy, then at the very least it represents the presidents' strong and influential opinion.

And that's frightening.

By raising the spectre of violence and the destruction of property on campus in a province where none has occurred, the university presidents create an atmosphere of hysteria and suspicion, not the atmosphere of "mutual respect" they claim in the report to be important.

Past experience in areas of social and political problems has taught us that those who cry for "law and order" are those who are in reality seeking to conceal the need for change by dishonestly attacking groups and individuals working towards justified and responsible social change.

The presidents have unjustifiably attacked the fundamental civil liberties of faculty and students in an area where the university should be setting an example for the rest of society. Among the civil liberties explicitly put into question by the report are:

— Since "obstruction of the university's essential processes," one of the major "crimes" for which students and faculty can be prosecuted, can apply to any word or act which disagrees with the present structures and functioning of the university, the power the report suggests to a president and his committee is arbitrary and dangerous. The guilt or innocence of accused persons will be based on

neither a clear statement of law nor established precedents.

— Denial of due process: students or faculty can be judged "guilty" of alleged "obstruction" and suspended without trial. The onus will then be on the individual to prove his innocence before the university courts.

— Double jeopardy: students or faculty can be charged and punished twice for the same "offense"; once before the university's disciplinary authority and once before the provincial courts.

Furthermore, through Order On Campus the university presidents have attacked the fundamental right to employ non-violent means of promoting change when normal channels have failed to respond to responsible needed change or to provide justice.

This situation was illustrated at the University of Windsor last year when a peaceful sit-in was held to protest the arbitrary firing of a popular professor and to change the normal channels which caused the dismissal of the professor without due process or genuine student-faculty participation.

Naturally, York's representatives (led by acting president Dennis Healy), participated in and approved the report.

Like the other Ontario universities, Order On Campus threatens to destroy the possibility that the various divergent views among both students and faculty about York should be and will be given the scope to be actively expressed without harassment, suspicion or unfair discrimination.

The importance of Order On Campus to York must not be underestimated, especially when you consider that there is presently a presidential committee examining the rights and responsibilities of members of this community.

The report, which is scheduled to be presented at the end of October, cannot help but be influenced by Order On Campus.

Regarding a similar discipline committee at the University of Toronto, president Claude Bissell commented: "I look on this working paper as a helpful document. It is one of several statements that will be used to determine Toronto policy."

The pattern for York will probably be the same. In this light, we urge that all concerned members of the York community make clear to the administration their opposition to Order On Campus.

More specifically we would ask that the administration publicly repudiate the document that it approved at the meeting of the Committee of Presidents of Universities of Ontario last week and explicitly guarantee that Order On Campus will not be used as a working paper by the Laskin committee presently studying rights and responsibilities.

Finally, we would also ask that the administration explain why it participated in the preparation and approval of this document when the question of the York community's rights and responsibilities was already under formal study by a student-faculty committee.



Excalibur

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it's been a busy week. what with the sfu strike and the coup report and telexing for the varsity and the moving hassle — we're in the central square now by the way. if you didn't see the tiny ad on page five sfu tried to mess up our production by holding off the strike but we fooled them and wrote the story anyway and it all came out true. good copy in this week. especially bob's and judy's and greg's features. looking like a good — but very busy — year. gotta go now. make sure you're at the staff meeting today at 3:15... it's very very very very important...

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