

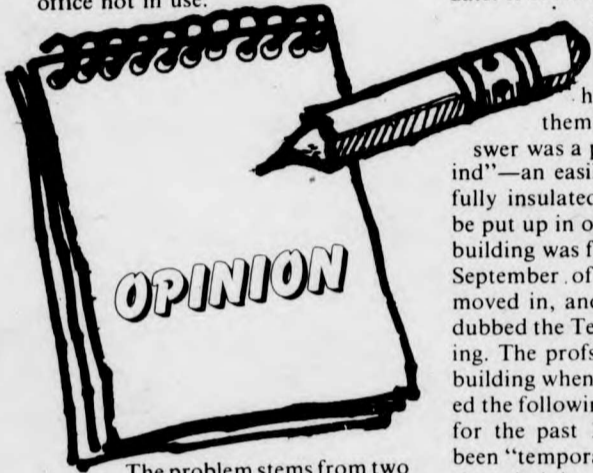
York bursting at seams as space shortage intensifies

By BOB REAUME

The next time you're sitting at the spare tables in Central Square having a coffee, enjoying a beer at any one of the several pubs, or spending some time at a student lounge, stop for a minute to consider how lucky you are.

Areas for student relaxation and recreation have been amply supplied at York and continue to hold a strong priority even in the face of an acute space shortage — an urgent shortage that is about to come to a head this fall.

According to Ross Dawson, Director of Ancillary Services, there will be about 65 to 70 new faculty members at York this fall, for which office space is simply not available. Trying to locate room for this many at York at the moment is just about impossible. Dawson says that every bit of usable space is currently occupied, and there isn't a classroom or an office not in use.



The problem stems from two things: First, York has not received any money from government for additional new buildings since 1973, yet enrollment has increased by 43 percent. In the 1973-74 academic year there were 12,958 full-time equivalent students at York; ten years later this figure had risen to 18,576 — an increase of 5,618 students, without a dollar more allocated for new buildings. Most of the increased space requirements have been accommodated within the room available, but according to Dawson, every bit of space has been squeezed out of existing buildings.

Secondly, there are 40 percent more students this year than four years ago, and it is this increase, as the enrollment bulge moves into upper years, that is causing the crisis to manifest itself this fall.

Another method of measurement may give you a better idea of how pressing a problem it is. A general formula based on square footage per person is often used in estimating the optimal area necessary for groups of people. Dawson himself acknowledges that it is only a formula, but says that it is widely accepted as a fairly accurate assessment. Based on this formula York would currently need an additional 439,000 square feet of building area. Believe it or not, this is equal to an extra two and a half Ross Buildings! And this is just

to accommodate the current population.

One possible solution is the extended use of more pre-fab or "temporary" buildings. You are all familiar, I'm sure, with that single-story, gray building on campus—you know, where you pay your fees, get your parking stickers, and pay your parking tickets. We all know of the illustrious Murray Ross, York's first president, after whom the Ross Humanities Building is named. And of course, who hasn't heard of the famous Canadian, Norman Bethune, after whom Bethune College is named? But who was this Mr. Temporary anyway?

Some history: The Temporary Office Building was erected in 1968 to alleviate a surprisingly similar urgent space shortage. Back then, when the Ross building was just being built, a building trade strike occurred and set back the completion date. It couldn't be ready for the fall of '68, and with hundreds of professors arriving something had to be done to find them office space. The answer was a pre-fab "Butler Building"—an easily erected steel-frame, fully insulated structure that could be put up in only three months. The building was finished (just barely) in September of 1968, the professors moved in, and it was appropriately dubbed the Temporary Office Building. The profs moved into the Ross building when it was finally completed the following year, but ever since, for the past 15 years, the TOB has been "temporarily" housing University administration offices.

But even back in 1968 it was taken for granted that the building would probably have to last at least 20 years. Dawson says that temporary structures are used quite frequently at universities and government office complexes, and that without exception, once the money has been spent and the building is up, it has to be used for a good many years. At the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, one building, Dawson recalls, was up for some 40 years before it was replaced with a more permanent structure.

Money, of course, is still the stumbling block. Even though a pre-fab structure is much less expensive than a permanent cement structure, the money has to come from somewhere and there's just not a lot of it around these days.

It makes you wonder how long it will be before student areas, like the pubs and lounges, are annexed for other, more "urgent" uses. Already this year, student study rooms in McLaughlin College were annexed for the new location of the Music Department. We'll have to wait and see what the administration does this fall, and where the 70 new faculty members finally end up.

But don't be surprised if the pubs seem more crowded this fall and your essays start coming back with coffee or beer stains on them.

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