

THE PLAGUE

by Mike McGaughey

STAGE 1

Dear Jack

How are you I hope you are feeling better than I am. As of late my skin has turned green, my taste buds have been destroyed and I have come down with an overpowering urge to sit on the can and perform various acts of defecation. Such exotic food combinations as "Tostaditos", "Mumbo Jumbo Burgers" and "Hoo Fung Dung" (an exquisite Chinese dish) have proved too much for my humble liking of mundane dishes such as roach beef, pork chops and potatoes. You are to be commended for the extensive use of imagination shown in describing what we eat. Now if only you could arrange for us to attend a Berlitz language school we could avoid the embarrassment of not being able to tell others what we have eaten.

The kitchen crew deserve a hearty cheer too, because without them we would not be able to savor Saga's delicacies. When you realize what Saga's staff will go through in order to serve us another unforgettable meal, you will probably experience tears (and possibly nausea). Who else would scour the roads throughout the night searching for dainty morsels which might have had the misfortune to be hit by a passing car, trying to gather a wide variety of meat in varying degrees of decomposition before the flies and other connoisseurs get to it first?

But Saga's valiant staff does not stop there. The whole staff pitches in, and under the supervision of their gourmet chef (recently fired from Griff's for failing to uphold Griff's standard of excellence in cuisine), they begin to disguise what they have gathered from our highways by secret methods known only by the staff (thank God). Nothing definite is known about the food (and here I use the term loosely) but blood rituals involving the sacrifice of 80-year-old virgins in the rear of the cafeteria is not unknown.

Finally the victim has the never-to-be-forgotten experience of tasting the finished product. A more interesting meal cannot be imagined! After you have finished translating what is on the menu and picked up your utensils from which you can easily tell what had been served in the meal prior to this one, you can imagine the tire marks on your food and indulge in lively debate with the person sitting next to you whether the poor creature on the plate was hit by an auto with Good-Year's Tiger Paw tires or one with Atlas Weather Guard 'S' snow tires. Biology students should appreciate the multitude of living organisms which appear in each forkful. Chemistry students find the analysis of the matter on the plate to be quite a challenging chemistry experiment. The rest of us have the satisfaction of experiencing different and usually more severe nausea than during the last meal we were treated to.

All the above benefits would not be possible without you, Jack. However I fail to understand the reasoning behind the serving of perfectly recognizable and edible food on Saturday evenings. Don't you know that our poor stomachs cannot take this type of food after a whole week of mouth-watering dleights. But, as always, you are thinking of our well-being when you regulate our consumption to one steak. Some rash fools might make themselves sick by having more than one if you, in your wisdom, did not protect them. So here's to you, Jack, our guiding light at mealtime. It brings a lump in our stomachs just to think of you.

Lovingly,
Room 13 Main.

STAGE 2

THE FOOD POLL — The Questions/The Answers

On Tuesday, Feb. 3 a food poll was conducted at the Malpeque Campus Cafeteria. This poll consisted of a nine question questionnaire as well as an additional space for any comments that the Malpeque diners wanted to offer. Approximately 250 copies of this paper were distributed to the students eating at the cafeteria between the hours of 12 o'clock noon and 1 p.m. Each student leaving the cafeteria was offered a copy and only a couple of people declined the opportunity to take one. This completed questionnaire was collected the same evening between the hours of 5:00 and 6:30 and approximately 120 people answered and returned their copy for evaluation.

The nine questions on the questionnaire were to be answered by circling the appropriate letter that corresponded with the desired comment. Not all questions were necessarily required to be answered and not all were.

SOME COMMENTS AND CRITICISMS OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

Several people remarked that they thought that the questionnaire was "loaded"; that is, was worded in such a manner as to infer that those filling out the form should provide replies that reflect in a detrimental manner on the present catering service on the Malpeque Campus. In these cases question 1 part (e) and question 2 part (c) were cited as examples of this alleged "fixing" of the results. Perhaps this allegation was partially true. This questionnaire was compiled with the aid of and under the influence of several Malpeque residence students who were to some degree opposed to the type of food service provided on the Malpeque Campus. However it must be realized that the judgment whose would be seriously influenced by such tactics, people filling out this questionnaire were not children and would consequently fill out the form in accordance with their own personal opinion regardless of how the question-

naire was worded. Part (e) of question 1 was inserted into the line-up for a very good reason. Since a strong feeling against the present food service was in evidence from the offset, an opposition almost bordering on irrationality, this section of question 1 was centered in the hope that the students would purge themselves of this irrational hatred and would be thus prepared to answer the remaining questions in a more objective manner. Obviously if the food had actually been 'unfit for human consumption' the Health Department would have suspended this operation long ago.

Question 2 part (c) was the only really unfair part of the entire paper. Originally it read 'from good to bad' but I was persuaded to change this to 'from bad to worse' under pressure from several students who claimed that the food was never of good quality. Several people pointed out this error when answering the question.

The various choices were compiled with the idea of providing the student with the opportunity of expressing not just agreement or opposition to a particular area, but to the precise degree of agreement or opposition.

By coincidence Mr. William Van Dyke of Saga Foods (the company operating the catering service on the Malpeque Campus) was present on the day the questionnaire was being distributed. He was conducting a food poll for Saga Foods on the same day and was consequently extremely interested in the results of the independent survey. He appeared to be shocked and genuinely disturbed at the apparent opposition of the students to the Saga company. Needless to say, we had a rather interesting discussion when he read many of the completed questionnaires.

One outstanding aspect of an independent survey is the fact that an independent survey can ask more direct and pertinent questions than can a company survey. After all, it is highly unlikely that Saga would ask the students if they wanted the same catering service retained for another year or if they would rather eat at the Downtown Campus where the catering service is run by a rival or whether the student thought he was getting his money's worth.

PREAMBLE

As was mentioned before not all questions were answered by all those polled therefore this accounts for the differences in the number of answers to the various questions.

Several students did not wish to answer question No. 7 since they had never eaten at the Montgomery Hall Cafeteria. Others refused to answer this question on the grounds that it was an 'unfair' question.

A few people also said that they had heard that Saga Foods were being replaced next year by Beaver Foods.

Several people also made a note of the fact that they were answering a question with certain reservations and then stated these reservations.

Now, on to the statistical results.....

THE RESULTS

QUESTION:

(1) In general, I think that the food served in the Malpeque Campus Cafeteria is: (a) excellent (b) good (c) fair (d) bad (e) horrible and unfit for human consumption.

A total of 114 people answer this question. The breakdown: (a) 3 or 2.6 per cent, (b) 18 or 15.8 per cent, (c) 33 or 28.9 per cent, (d) 40 or 35.1 per cent, (e) 20 or 17.5 per cent.

(2) The quality of the food: (a) remains at a stable level, (b) varies slightly, (c) fluctuates widely from bad to worse.

114 people also answer this question. The breakdown as follows: (a) 11 or 9.6 per cent, (b) 59 or 51.7 per cent, (c) 44 or 38.6 per cent.

(3) The quality of the food has since Christmas. (a) improved, (b) remained constant, (c) deteriorated.

109 students replied to this question. The results as follows: (a) 7 or 6.4 per cent, (b) 54 or 49.5 per cent, (c) 48 or 44 per cent.

(4) The food tastes: (a) excellent, (b) good, (c) fair, (d) poor, (e) horrible.

This question was answered by 114 people as follows: (a) 0 or 0.0 per cent, (b) 14 or 12.3 per cent, (c) 39 or 34.2 per cent, (d) 37 or 32.5 per cent, (e) 24 or 21.1 per cent.

(5) The sanitary conditions at the cafeteria are: (a) excellent, (b) good, (c) fair, (d) inadequate, (e) horribly inadequate.

This was the most answered question as 117 people replied. (a) 0 or 0.0 per cent, (b) 21 or 19.9 per cent, (c) 32 or 27.4 per cent, (d) 46 or 39.3 per cent, (e) 18 or 14.4 per cent.

(6) When the student help in the cafeteria leaves after Easter I believe that the food service will: (a) improve, (b) remain constant, (c) deteriorate, (d) further deteriorate.

104 students replied to this question. The breakdown: (a) 3 or 2.9 per cent, (b) 40 or 38.4 per cent, (c) 34 or 32.7 per cent, (d) 27 or 25.9 per cent.

(7) I would rather eat at: (a) Malpeque Campus Cafeteria, (b) Montgomery Hall Cafeteria.

This question was answered by 103 people in the following breakdown: (a) 10 or 9.7 per cent, (b) 93 or 90.3 per cent.

(8) The present catering service should be for next year. (a) retained, (b) replaced.

A total of 110 people answered this question. (a) or 23.6 per cent, (b) 84 or 76.4 per cent.

(9) Are we getting sufficient value for our money? (a) yes, (b) no.

This was the least answered question with 98 replies. (a) 15 or 15.3 per cent, (b) 83 or 84.7 per cent.

THE COMMENTS, ETC.

Perhaps the most interesting and enlightening part of the entire survey was the students own comments on what

they thought of the food service and what they thought should be done. These ranged from a few very obscene comments to a raft of useful suggestions, and from downright condemnation to unabashed praise. Here are some of them.

"Saga Foods—don't come back next year!"

"The value of the food better improve next year if we pay \$100 more."

"Get rid of McGill."

"Not all the student help will leave the cafeteria after Easter. Present catering service should be given another year to try and improve."

"The worms in the string beans sure don't turn me on!"

"The green beans should be checked for worms before they are served."

"I think that Mr. Cross should be offered the contract on a cost plus basis."

"I don't think that it is worth another \$100."

"If Saga was operating on a cost plus) basis similar to the catering service at Montgomery Hall, I feel that the difference in quality of the two would be only marginal."

"It's not worth additional comment."

"We should pay only for the meals we eat."

"I like the food. Some people are just too god-damn fussy."

"Please change the catering service or I'll die."

"You should just give us food with common names not those weird . . . you don't know what the hell you're eating."

"I think you're doing yerv well. Keep up the good work."

"The people that complain don't have anything else to do."

"The food tastes like shit."

"Saga sucks."

"The food sucks."

"It's unspeakable."

"Some people have been eating bland food all their lives and don't appreciate variety."

"I think that Mr. McGill is doing an excellent job and I sincerely hope he remains for another year."

"The food and service are very good."

"Jack McGill is approachable on anything—complaints (lead to) improvements if students go to him."

"...quite poor and flavorless. Even the steaks are getting smaller and smaller."

"Stop trying to fool everybody."

"The food is lousy."

"Should have much better sanitary conditions . . . forks are horribly dirty."

"Less of these way-out dishes which seem to consist of nothing more than left-overs from previous meals."

"McGill should be inspected more often by his superiors."

"More pepper and salt shakers needed. Silverware is unsanitary."

"Get a new catering service for next year and make sure that it is not as lowly or as cheap as the one we are presently experiencing."

"Eat as much as you want."

"Yetch!"

"McGill should eat at the cafeteria more often. I believe that it's about time that we had a change in dining room facilities."

"I think the food should be made edible."

"We are getting our money's worth in shit only."

"In general the food is very poor and has always been so."

"Please don't abandon the ship or give up the ghost, we still have two months left and unfortunately we must eat for those two months."

"I feel that the students in residence should have the final say in what catering service is chosen."

"If we are to pay \$100 more next year the food had better be improved..."

"Scallops."

"Poor desserts. Hot food cold."

"We are getting three choices but usually only about 5-10% of the students eat two of these. Thus I propose two choices, both of which are edible."

"We need something to keep up going other than the coffee shoppe."

"When are you going to start serving chicken instead of overage crow?"

"More bacon for breakfasts."

"Breakfasts are absolutely terrible. If my mother's lunches were that bad, I would never have grown up."

"I wish I could go in and pick up clean knives on the first or second or even third time. It is getting ridiculous having to stand there and throw ten or fifteen knives into the container for dirty dishes and still have a dirty knife."

"The food here is sufficient only for feeding pigs."

"...new catering service."

"I would like to see meals optional with residence."

etc. etc. etc.

A BACKWARD LOOK

It was interesting to notice how many times the word "shit" was used to describe the food and overall, service on the Malpeque Campus.

Another point of paramount importance was the number of students that said that they would like to see either a two meal a day setup (since they don't eat breakfast) or pay only for the meals they actually (especially in the case of those who skip breakfast and go home on week-ends).

It is obvious that the raise in residence fees is still a live issue as it was mentioned several times.

It's a wonder that the Administration doesn't solicit opinions from the residence students in choosing the catering service for next year. Obviously they need a voice in the matter. Where the hell does the S.O. stand in this issue anyway?