The Gateway

Member of the Canadian University Press

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A Critic Is Silenced

Apparently there are people who prefer a dubious expediency to truth.

We have asked many times for literary and artistic honesty. And in doing so we but echo a plea which has remained for centuries foundational to those cultural values we rightly cherish. Why must we cry yet again?

Dr. J. W. Bilsland, professor of English at this university, has resigned as drama critic for The Edmonton Journal because, as he understood it, he was not allowed to publish his critiques of artistic productions as he honestly evaluated them.

Apparently the powers that be expect to foster cultural productions in this city by ensuring that every review is a rave. Apparently our first concern ought to be to avoid wounding the tender feelings of our artists, and our second ought to be to conceal from the public the fact that Edmonton does, on occasion, produce second-rate (or worse) artistic efforts.

Such an attitude does a dis-service to all of us: to journalism, to art, to artists, and to Edmonton. The reasons are obvious, and have been rehearsed many times.

If a performance has been mediocre, or merely adequate, the critic's job is to say so, and to suggest remedies. Neither performer nor public really wants to be honeyed over. As long as we value quality, there is no substitute for candor.

If indeed Dr. Bilsland's services were to be acceptable only so long as his phrases were salved and soothing, The Journal betrays both artists and activities, which it would rather serve.

Eliminate Campus Death Trap

Anyone who has been in the new Cameron Library cannot help but notice that the stairwell is very deep. Not quite so noticeable, but rather more serious is the condition of the guard rail which surrounds it.

The rail is much too low for safety. It is only a little more than two feet six inches high, which on a tall person barely reaches above the knee. In all probability, of course, no accident will occur. But this is not good enough.

Any number of unforeseen events could precipitate a disaster in this situation. It is possible, but not probable, that a power failure, for example, will occur in the building. This happened in an Eastern Canadian university this fall in similar circumstances and resulted in the death of a student who fell two storeys. History has been known to repeat itself.

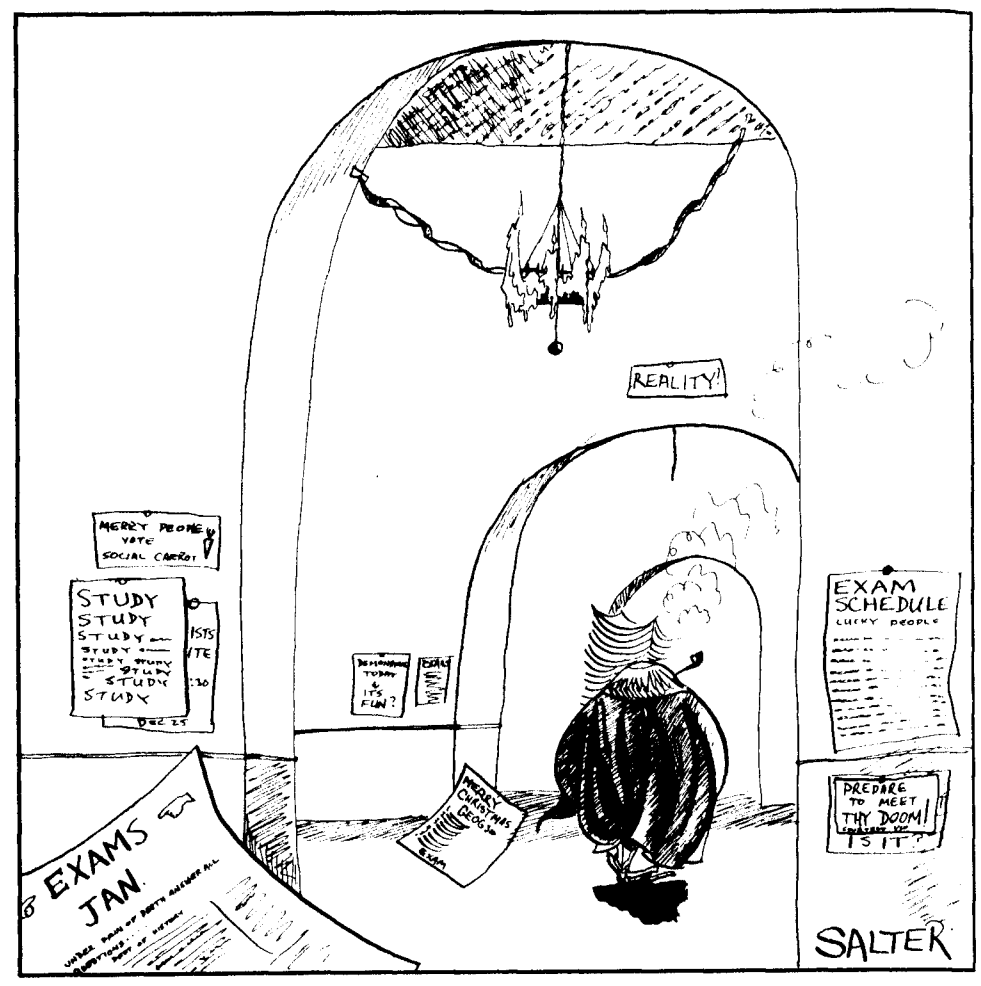
Other unlikely but possible causes of accidents are numerous. Students, like other people, have been known to trip or slip on stairs. A spell of dizziness or nausea resulting in a person's temporary loss of equilibrium on the stairs is also not impossible.

Other occurrences not beyond the realm of possibility spring to mind. Students have been known to appear on campus slightly under the influence of alcohol. Undesirable and foolish as this may be, it is no reason to leave a booby trap for such people in the library.

Generally, the design and architecture of the Cameron Library are good, and mark a significant improvement over the Rutherford Library. But the stairwell guard represents a defect which should be corrected immediately. It will, of course, cost money, but a price tag should not be put on human safety.

The Gateway urges the administration to take steps to correct this fault in the library's design. We also urge our complacent Students' Council (Merry Christmas, Group!) to ensure that the administration does alleviate the condition.

The fact that the low railing does not represent a probable, but only a possible, cause of accidents should not confuse the issue: a danger exists. It can be eliminated by administration action, and should be disposed of without delay, for the safety of all of us.



CHRISTMAS . . . BAH . . . HUMBUG

After Midnight

Our twenty-first edition of The Gateway is off the press, and it will be the last one before the Christmas break. In keeping with our feelings and tradition, we have wished a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to all. Here, though, I would like to express a few specific wishes to some people in particular.

To students and professors who have faced each other for the past few months, a respite from the academic routine—and a respite from each other.

To University President Johns, no more diligent Gateway reporters at the keyhole, overhearing what some thought they perhaps should not overhear.

To diligent Gateway reporters, plaudits and bylines for their diligence.

To Mr. Henry Beissel, a new book of expressions in Latin.

To His Worship Mayor William Hawrelak, a book on how to conduct orderly meetings.

To Police Chief M. F. E. Anthony, an undergraduate course in criminal law.

To famous Fabius, bounteous quantities of the fraternal spirit.

To residence students who eat residence food, no more enrichment in their food.

To the full-timers at the print shop who have to put up with us all year, a respite from The Gateway.

To my editors and staffers who bear criticism—sometimes justified, often unfair—a hard-earned, well-deserved holiday from the whole system—and my sincere wishes for best marks in the New Year.

Finally, I can report that the title of this column has not yet become a misnomer.

Branny Schepanovich

Rolling Again

The Journal ran a picture of our mayor seated on a tricycle. This is undoubtedly the first indication that Edmonton is "rolling again."

Letters

Letters should be addressed to The Editor, The Gateway, University of Alberta. The Gateway will publish letters under a pseudonym, but in all cases writers must sign their own names and include an address or telephone number.

Looking Back through The Gateway

November 22, 1917

A Christmas Message to the Boys in the Trenches

. . . "Peace and Good Will." They are no more a mockery now than they ever have been, for the best things in the world are the things most worth fighting for, and you are fighting for the best thing of all—a peace that will endure—the only sort out of which universal goodwill will ever spring. Our hearts are with you in the fight; and when next Christmas dawns (for surely this is the last of the waiting ones!), you and we shall say the words together, with the richer meaning which your present efforts will have given them. For that, you and we gladly pay the price. And when you are with us again, with the great task done, we shall be proud of you if you have the D.S.O. or the D.C.M., and quite as proud of you if you haven't; for your real reward is not in the accident of honors . . .