



letters

noble cartoon

To The Editor:

Allow me to congratulate you on your noble cartoon in Friday, Dec. 6th's Gateway. The expansiveness of mind it displays is truly amazing.

It presents a great many things I'd like to take you to the barricades over like "hate literature and poetry"—especially the "poetry"—Beware the word Mr. Bassek—Beware the deadly word—the dreamers' world of reality that poets create, of peace and love and beauty, the escape from other reality that Vietnam, and maybe the Protestant Ethic too, have established. The escape, or maybe the hope?

And beware the men's ballet slippers, Mr. Bassek. (Ye Gods—to dance—and men yet!). Let's give the marines back their gasoline. Those wonderful men can better burn evil books (like Das Kapital), and non-aligned babies (with yellow skins, but Red souls) than waste their time (again "escape") in one of the most beautiful, difficult, disciplined and powerful of the Classic Arts.

You have sir, seen Right to the heart of the matter (Have you seen "the Nutcracker Suite?"). There is in this Evil World, Mr. Bassek, a universal Conspiracy, mind, they, poor souls, are dupes like the rest of us. Rather a conspiracy perpetrated by the thinkers, the creators, the dreamers, towards the overthrow of "All We Hold Dear." A conspiracy to shove us all into their mold—so that we too, think and create and dream.

Keep fighting, Sir, the dreaming is the worst!

Mary Ann Alexander
arts 3

misunderstood

To The Editor:

I am writing simply to point out to Mr. Kottke and anyone who might have read his Dec. 10 "Viewpoint" and not my original article that he has entirely misunderstood the drift of my argument.

Part of the fault is mine; for I now see that there is a genuine linguistic ambiguity in the sentence he quotes at the beginning. The referent of the last word "it" might be "natural right" or "financial support."

But since the claim that a natural right is an animal to be demanded is, and Mr. Kottke is indubitably right here, a ludicrous claim, perhaps the possibility that I was not making it might have been tentatively explored.

I was claiming that it is reasonable for graduates to demand guaranteed financial support, and I produced several arguments for this point. The concept of "natural right" is a powerful catalyst of human emotions of the baser sort, and I deliberately avoided basing any of my argument on it.

As concerns Mr. Kottke's second point of criticism, of course there must be objective standards of academic merit. I did not suggest that the Minister of Education stand on the steps of the Administration Building, handing out \$5,000 to anybody who offers to buy Dean McCalla a drink.

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in this, our last regular page five for this term, letter writers again hold forth. they blast away at many current topics, but, as usual, forget to wish anyone a merry christmas

Again, I agree with Mr. Kottke that one who made any such suggestion would be a fool, a knave and a vagabond.

I am prepared to debate whether the system of four exams a year for five courses for four years is necessarily the best way of determining such merit, but that is another and a longer story. My point is that a graduate student should be capable of being trusted with guaranteed financial support.

If a University feels in any given case that they can't trust a student, then once questions whether they should voluntarily have accepted the student in the first place. Further, it is just not true that every student, particularly one doing thesis research, works best under continuous pressure, nor that it does every student good to be subjected to such pressure.

Mr. Kottke is right in suggesting my British background helped to provide a stimulus for my article. In Britain, anybody with the desired undergraduate record is guaranteed a grant adequate for one person to live on comfortably for the entire period of his research, unless after a year his work has been grossly inadequate.

I was victim of this system, in that, for a complex set of reasons, my undergraduate record was not considered immediately acceptable. I therefore fulfilled my residence requirements for the Ph.D. at Cambridge (not Oxford) under considerable academic and financial pressure.

I found the experience to a large degree emotionally unpleasant and intellectually sterile. In North America, I have formed the impression that experiences like mine are the rule rather than the exception (I may, of course, have got a completely mistaken impression, but that needs evidence).

There is great pressure on the universities themselves to get the most out of their students, particularly their graduate students, on whom vast sums of money are spent. I simply offered the suggestion that adopting a system of guaranteed financial support for graduates might be one way of doing this in that area.

I see nothing in Mr. Kottke's article to make me withdraw that suggestion, although I can see that I might have to change the words I used to put it forward.

Roger A. Shiner
dept. of philosophy

distortions

To The Editor:

I am amazed that The Gateway would publish an editorial so full of distortions of the truth. It is obvious that the writer, Bruce Ferrier, exhibits all the puerile symptoms of the left-wing dialecticism and their system of semantics, which is based on the hypothesis that slavery is freedom.

For example: "If the United States is allowed to intervene wherever and whenever it feels its interests threatened, what is to prevent China or Russia doing the same?"

The historical facts are that the freedom-and-peace-loving countries

of Russia and China have since 1945 enslaved hundreds of millions of people in the following countries: Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Poland, East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, Hungary and Tibet.

Mr. Ferrier states that: "The bitter truth is that no Communist government could inflict more suffering on the Vietnamese people than the United States' war already has." The Communists would love to have a chance to prove that Comrade Ferrier is in error, and I believe that they could.

G. P. Connolly
science 1

The article in question is a signed editorial column, written by a member of the editorial board. It does not represent this newspaper's editorial opinion on the Vietnam war, but rather the personal view of Mr. Ferrier.—The Editor.

good teachers

To The Editor:

You asked for contributions on the topic of good teachers. Here is mine.

It seems to me that faculty members tend to concentrate on research because they know that frequency of publication is the principal criteria used in evaluating their performance when promotion and salary increments are being considered. It also seems likely that those in authority, who make decisions on this basis depend upon the criteria of publication, not from any indifference to good teaching, but because as Professor MacIntyre has pointed out, it is difficult to tell whether a staff member is a good teacher or not.

Difficult, yes, but surely it is not impossible. The Academic Relations Committee of the students' union now provides those members of the faculty who are interested with a way of evaluating their own performance. This is of course the "Students Opinionaire." Now I admit that those who use this for the first time tend to get a nasty shock, but if skill in teaching is a function of practice and careful preparation, and to a certain point it is, then the continued use of the opinionaire can make better teaching possible. Indeed it will make it likely because the opinionaire not only tells us where our weaknesses lie, and without that knowledge improvement is unlikely, but also gives us a motive for trying to improve, by touching our pride if nothing else.

If the opinionaire can do this job it seems reasonable to suppose that it can also be used for identifying those whose performance as teachers is better than average. Certainly if a staff member were to find that, after some years in which he had published very little that he was not being promoted, and if it were the case that in those years he had built up a file of opinionaires which suggested that the bulk of his students had found him to be a better than average teacher, I feel that he would be justified in using this evidence in any appeal he might make against the decision of the promotions committee.

Considered from the point of view of those who make promotions, I think the chief reservations they might have about allowing such an

appeal would be that the opinionaire was not drawn up with this specific task in mind, and that it might not be entirely suitable for this purpose.

George Sitwell
assistant professor.
dept. of geography

vietnam

To The Editor:

I think the time has come to put the Vietnam war in its proper perspective. We have recently seen and heard so many comments, wise and immature, about this war, that one is led to believe that the whole situation is something new and unfamiliar. True, to many noble Americans sitting in their comfortable secure homes, such a situation is probably unfamiliar, at least in practice. But let us think for a moment to see if this really is something new. Of course it is not. Similar acts of aggression are simultaneously taking place in many other parts of the world. The difference is that the Vietnam one is currently being portrayed by the press, news-casts, etc. So people are therefore discussing it, protesting against it, or protesting against the protesters. Not that I have anything against the protesters; on the contrary, it is satisfying to see so many people demonstrating against war. Only a sick mind could condone war (as an example of one, see cartoon by Bassek, Friday, Dec. 10th issue). But are there protesters really demonstrating against the principle of war, or simply American policy in Vietnam. How many of these protesters for example would have been equally willing to march in Calgary as a protest to British aggression in Aden, British aggression in Malaya, Soviet aggression in Hungary, French aggression in Algeria, etc., etc., etc.

What I am trying to illustrate is that wars (or acts of aggression or whatever one may call them) are not isolated incidents occurring now and then. Wars are going on all the time. They must for the very existence of our so-called "civilization."

Let's not be too harsh on the Americans, for they are merely trying to repeat what the British have done over the past centuries, namely to found a great empire of "democratic" societies. Naturally anyone trying to interfere in this American bid is a Communist (or some other nasty type), and must be removed by force (in the interest of liberty etc.). The official reasons for aggression differ, but are always the same in principle. The major stumbling-block to the Americans are the Russians and the Chinese, who apparently want to play the same game. As in any other game, there is only one winner. Let's not be misled into thinking that the Americans are struggling against an undemocratic ideology. The forms of society practised today by these three powers are essentially the same (even if they may differ slightly in theory). And in any case, is not God on the side of the Americans (we are told this often enough). The struggle is merely between Empire-builders.

In conclusion I say that: so long as we condone a society in which force prevails, and is the only means to an end, then such a society must continue to employ force to ensure its very existence.

James B. Hudson
grad studies

get the message?

To The Editor:

May I draw attention to the aptness of Dale Enarson's comments in Viewpoint, with a garland of quotations; a selection only—others, equally appropriate, will hit you in the eye: "Name speakers;" "diplomacy in the handling of the governmental officials;" "under the noses of the faculty;" "the Premier is not the dope he was formerly considered to be;" "the calibre of men leading this province;" "unanimous decision;" "great things for this campus;" "get the message?"

Got it.

C. Kenneth Johnstone
grad studies

Viewpoint

Rarely have I seen obscurity so malevolently blended with asininity as in Mr. Ekkehard Kottke's December 10 "Viewpoint."

Mr. Kottke seems to want to take Mr. Roger Shiner to task for his article on "The needs of graduate students," which appeared this fall in the GSA magazine Untitled, and subsequently as a Page Five feature in the December 1 Gateway.

I am not going to discuss the rights and wrongs of the particular intellectual issues at stake. Mr. Shiner, I understand, is already doing that elsewhere.

by
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macdonald

Rather, I feel compelled to discuss another aspect of the debate, which seems to me to have far-reaching and unpleasant implications.

Mr. Kottke's article, he informs us, involves the "grinding" of a "private axe." He quite explicitly calls into question Mr. Shiner's capabilities as a teacher of Philosophy.

Yet Mr. Kottke's criticisms of Mr. Shiner's article suggest a misunderstanding of the article's arguments. Worse, the kind of misunderstanding evidenced can only be described as malicious: it is as though Mr. Kottke had to distort in order to find grounds for attack.

If it is nothing more than a misinformed and malicious personal attack on a member of the university faculty—albeit a junior and temporary member—then the matter is clearly quite serious indeed.

Mr. Kottke's attitude seems to be that, as a tax- and fees-paying student, he has a right to dictate what is to be taught to him, how it is to be taught, and who is to teach it. He may be excessively influenced here by the "consumer industry" approach to education, but that only proves the weakness of that approach.

If a student thinks he has a legitimate cause for complaint against one of his teachers, let him have the courage to approach the teacher concerned personally—which I am told Mr. Kottke has not done—or let him take his complaint to Mr. al Karmy's Academic Relations Committee.

If the student body is allowed to form the impression that it can with impunity conduct a public witch-hunt, attacking any teacher against whom it bears a personal grudge, then the atmosphere of this university will poison and degenerate rapidly, and minimize the attractions which this university holds for the academic profession.

I should, if I were the faculty member involved, be very apprehensive if the case is not investigated by the Students' Union DIE Board, on the grounds that Mr. Kottke has acted against the best interests of the university.

Should such an inquiry be conducted, however, Mr. Kottke had best consider how to formulate a less wretched argument for his case than he has done in the pages of Gateway.

Iain Macdonald is a graduate student, former students' union secretary-treasurer, former SUB planning commission chairman and editor of Untitled, the graduate students' newsletter.