

5 letters

teaching and research

To The Editor:

Since you have invited additional comments apropos of my letter in the Dec. 3 issue, I would like to accept the invitation in order to add clarification to statements I then made. These relate, first, to the research vs teaching question, and, second, to the criteria I feel justify a complaint or its opposite.

As research and teaching are inextricably joined in universities, it is particularly important that neither be exalted at the expense of the other. Where the so-called "publish or perish" system exists, professors who wish to keep their posts can find themselves forced to sacrifice teaching to the demand to prove themselves in print. This compulsion leads to the hardly tacit assumption that undergraduate teaching especially is an annoying interference with "real work," and that the graduate course which fosters this "real work" is the only kind that matters. One of the bitterer and more justifiable complaints at Berkeley was against the pre-emption of senior professors by graduate students and research, which left teaching assistants and junior instructors to staff the undergraduate classrooms.

Now, I by no means think that every distinguished scholar and scientist is the rightful property of every freshman, if this is to be at the expense of their obligation to advance their own knowledge and to train their future colleagues. On the other hand, I do not think, either, that this obligation justifies retreat to the rarefied airs of Laputa at the very time when their knowledge and experience make them able to communicate the essentials of their disciplines most clearly. The better the professor, the more he should feel encouraged to teach beginners.

So to the second point. If good undergraduate teaching is to receive its due recognition, it has to become more visible than it often is—but visible under normal conditions. An Inspector of Professors is not normal; indeed, he may well bring out the worst in the person whose class he visits. Suspicion of an ear at the door is if anything worse; no one can do his best with half his mind on the suspected listener-in and the less attentive half upon his students.

The only people who see teaching under normal conditions are the students who sit in class daily. They are the best judges of their instructor's total performance; neither they nor he are likely to benefit from additional inspection. But a classful of students should not be felt to be a classful of spies, in particular not by those newcomers to the profession who are least sure of their own competence. Here, a tactful suggestion to the instructor, or a request for information or a louder voice is probably the best recourse. If students are to be responsible judges of teaching, they should have some standard to ascertain what sort of performance, good or bad, is worth taking to a department head or dean.

Certainly, there is little question about consistently poor preparation, consistent irrelevance, blantant discourtesy, persistent refusal to give

nb

our readers write, they surely do.
they turn the air a stormy blue.
of letters we can't have enough.
write us some both smooth and rough.

reasonable outside assistance, and absenteeism. Provided that these are consistent, and not the human lapses of a man with a headache, and provided that they are not the private judgment of one disgruntled student but the affliction of a whole class, all these ought to be complained of. But regular attendance, consistently good preparation, relevant discussion, courtesy, reasonable outside aid, and the like are the normal professional qualities that the university should be able to take for granted in its teaching staff. No student ought to feel it incumbent upon him to run to a dean with praise for any of these. They simply are not news.

As for the third possibility, excellence that deserves reporting, it is almost impossible to standardize. I myself say that the best teacher makes himself superfluous by turning his students into their own teachers, both independently and in co-operation with him; and that, assuming learning is fun, he infects others with this assumption. But I am well aware that excellence of the kind students hope for is infinitely variable. The most I can add is a repetition of my desire that it be recognized.

Jean MacIntyre
asst. prof. of english

priorities

To The Editor:

As a question of priority and editorial policy . . . WHY, on the front page of last Wednesday's edition, does a "free" advertisement for a local discotheque appear rather than the trully (sic) newsworthy announcement of Mr. Andy Brook's winning the appointment as Alberta's 1966 Rhodes Scholar, which assumed a somewhat less obvious location on the third page???

If it is a question of expediency in the make-up of the front page wouldn't a less commercially oriented picture and continuity have done the job?

If it is a question of adding a little more color to the paper . . . IS the front page really the place for such attempts at increasing the "sex appeal" of The Gateway?

Thank you.

John J. Hague
arts 2

This newspaper is attempting to achieve more variety in its general format, while at the same time retaining its serious approach to the news. Our front page does not contain all the important news—no newspaper can achieve this. As a result of the limitation of our page size, we must make the front page into a "display" page, with emphasis upon two or three news items and pictures which tell a story. A discotheque dancer is not "hard news," admittedly; but she is an image of our times.

Newspapers, in their news and features pages, attempt to mirror our times; and therefore cannot exclude certain images which some of their readers might find distasteful. This newspaper is not attempting to increase its "sex appeal," as your letter suggests.

This newspaper does not give away free advertising either, as

your letter suggests. . . As The Gateway expands its operation, it will be giving coverage to off-campus entertainment, to the Legislature and to the many public meetings and forums which do not take place on this campus. Perhaps our discotheque dancer is one of the first indications that we are expanding our thinking before we expand our physical plant. When the Legislature opens in mid-February, I think you will see another indication of this.

As for Mr. Brook becoming Alberta's 1966 Rhodes Scholar and not receiving front-page coverage, we can only express our regrets. Indeed, the recognition of scholastic and extra-curricular achievement is front-page news. Unfortunately, there was no way in which his story could be placed on page one of the newspaper in question. The SUPA "Vietnam booth" issue was one which we felt important enough to merit the large headline and extensive coverage on page one. Mr. Brook was probably the victim of a "fast news day."—The Editor

misinformation?

To The Editor:

On page four of The Gateway for Friday, November 26, 1965, one of your editorialists under the heading "The Winds of Change" states that the faculty have an on-Campus liquor license for the sale of liquor in the Faculty Club.

This is not so. The faculty have a twenty-year lease on the property on which they have built their club, and were granted a club license in the same way as the Mayfair Golf Club, the Edmonton Club, or other similar organizations. During the years in which the Faculty occupied and paid for a lounge on-Campus in the Students' Union Building, they did not have a club license.

The student case for a liquor license on-Campus will not be advanced by arguments based on misinformation of this kind.

Aylmer A. Ryan
Provost and
Executive Assistant
to the President

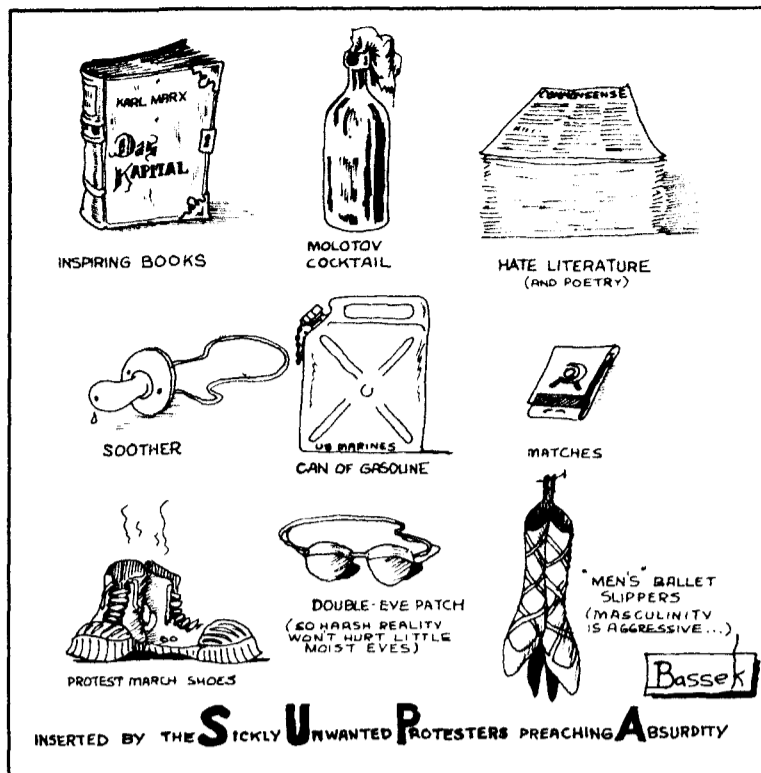
Only a technicality prevents the Faculty Club from being "on campus." Geographically, the club is on campus. In reality, liquor is on the premises there with the university's sanction, just as the editorial in question suggests. The students' case for a liquor licence is enhanced by the Faculty Club's case, in our opinion.—The Editor.

thou shalt not

To The Editor:

Did you know that there are certain books in Cameron Library which the authorities make difficult, if not impossible, for students to obtain? These books are found in a locked glass cabinet far behind the main circulation desk in the library.

When I was in the library Friday, I asked a female employee if I could look at the books in the cabinet (I had heard previously that there was a cabinet in the library which contains "pornographic" works of literature). She was not familiar with



vietnam kit

library procedures, so she took me to the cabinet after searching for the key.

She opened the cabinet, and I was in the act of browsing when a second female employee came up and informed me that I was not permitted to look in the cabinet. She asked me if indeed I am a student at this university, to which I replied in the affirmative. Then, she told me that if I wanted a book from this collection I should go to

the card catalogue and find its call number.

I told her I thought this suggestion was ridiculous, in view of the fact I was only browsing at the time; and left to avoid creating a scene which she obviously was trying to avoid.

What, may I ask, is the reason for having books in a university library if they are not to be readily available to anyone who wants them?

Hugh Bryce
ag 4

Viewpoint

With reference to Mr. Shiner's Page 5-Feature of Dec. 1st, I would like to make a few comments. Mr. Shiner who comes to us from Oxford University (the school that grants B.A. degrees to our honors graduates) and teaches 3 sections of phil. 240 demands, "I am not saying that the graduates have a natural right to . . . support, but that it is reasonable for them to demand it." I would like to retort that, given such an animal as natural right, one either possesses it or one does not.

Very likely Mr. Shiner is just interested in the financial benefits of some right or other. He bases his demands for the graduate student on the premises that "any graduate is a good graduate" or else it's the fault of the graduate school at any rate—pay it must. Now, if there is such an animal as good, there must be another bad one, i.e., there can be only a good graduate (student) because we can contrast him with a bad one.

If Mr. Shiner thus fails to make valid inferences from observations of his present environment which is said to be infested exclusively with "voices of irresponsible fanatics," at least this is the description he attaches to our government, our community, and our university, then he suggestion offers itself that there might be a malfunction in Mr. Shiner's perceptual or attitudinal apparatus. I am making this claim as a tax-payer and contributor of university fees with a view to the type of teaching that I am receiving in return. In addition I am grinding a private axe, but this only by the by.

The fact remains that Mr. Shiner wishes to teach Alberta a lesson which on balance would tend to turn this province into a blissful little nest where philosophers have become kings or kings have become philosophers. This is utopia and by definition out of Alberta's reach.

What it is that drives Mr. Shiner into Utopia? For one it is the "degrading scramble for grades" in the undergraduate schools. It is also the fact that the powers that be insist on tangible standards of performance before they are prepared to remunerate such performance. It is the conflict between academic and political interests that characterizes the history of higher education in one form or another.

Yet it would be exactly the absence of objective measurements that would enable an administrator to determine arbitrarily, "if you're a good boy, I'll be nice to you and give you a fellowship." The public demands that such a statement be based at least superficially on some sort of objective criterion, like grades.

Mr. Shiner's distinction between an undergraduate and a graduate student may be defended as far as he is concerned with a difference in degree, but the degree is the only difference. There cannot be a difference in principle as he suggests when he writes that "graduate work is a vocational decision in a way in which the decision to start at a university in the first place is not." I suggest that on this matter every student can only speak for himself.

The question of remuneration of graduate work has been settled by the laws of supply and demand in the past. I see no reason to abandon this principle in the future. But then again I fail to discern any stake of Mr. Shiner's in a country or continent that has made it its primary objective to educate the rabble.

Ekkehard Kottke is a third year education student.