

# No escaping responsibility

In replying to Dr. Vederas, I would first like to clarify my position regarding the moral responsibility of scientists, in order to avoid further misunderstanding. Unfortunately, Dr. Vederas chose to focus his attention on my example rather than on the main point of my letter. In retrospect, I may have over-zealously pursued the case of anti-pregnancy vaccine research, since I seem to have given Dr. Vederas cause to conclude that morality is merely a matter of personal opinion and that I advocate that these opinions become the basis for judging the work of other scientists. That was not my intention.

The fundamental issue which I raised centered around a personal observation that scientists do not discuss the practical and social consequences of their research. Dr. Vederas seems to disagree with my belief that this is more than a matter of personal opinion — that it is in fact an obligation. I fail to see how he expects us to make wise decisions about the implementation of new

knowledge if those who are most intimately involved do not discuss the potential uses and abuses to which their research can be applied and make that information available to us.

Dr. Vederas twice refers to the "truth". Both references are to abstractions which lack both meaning and relevance. With regard to the first, it may surprise Dr. Vederas that I do not assume my own opinions to be "The Truth" as he obviously implies. As for 'the truth' which he suggests can be uncovered by science, this must needs be rather labile — at best an approximation of reality. I choose instead to put my faith in truthfulness, that quality associated with honesty. One can honestly express moral views without being dogmatic or passing judgment. That is what I suggest science is lacking.

Although I agree with Dr. Vederas that scientific seminars are not the most appropriate context in which to express personal moral opinions, I still contend that in the absence of any alternative forum, scientists

should be free to discuss the practical consequences of their research within this setting.

Ted Milner  
Grad Studies

## Inconsistent

I should like to, briefly, reply to R. Shaver's letter of 81-01-06. IF the UAB and Mr. Shaver are really concerned about "areas of university life where ... to compete against other universities," if they are concerned, then why:

1. Have they refused to fund debating which is far closer than sports to the purpose of university life?

2. Have they funded an activity which was dropped as costing too much and only reintroduced with the understanding that it be self-supporting - e.g. football?

3. Have they had such vastly differing amounts of support for sports based on sex, height and national origin?

Awaiting Mr. Shaver's reply  
I remain  
K. Warner

# Big time sports no waste

In response to the letter "Cushy perks for elite jocks are not justified," I would like to express a few thoughts about this subject.

High-level competitive sport answers and satisfies two basic needs for our community:

1. Competition at a high level is in itself a "goal" which aspiring athletes attempt to achieve, but as well, this high level provides the athlete with a place where skills can be honed and where "excellence" can be attempted and sometimes achieved;

2. Our existence within the community has become increasingly more stressful and thus a release from these pressures is imperative. High-level sports undoubtedly is the major form of entertainment enjoyed by millions as the escape or the release from "everyday" tension.

If those who maintain that intercollegiate sports be done away with because it is a waste of

money, are to be consistent and logical, they must hold that all forms of organized entertainment should be abandoned because it is a waste of money. What nonsense! Entertainment, whether it involves sporting activities, the arts or otherwise, is a required and necessary aspect of society that allows our community and those within it to prosper.

Undoubtedly, the authors of "Cushy perks" didn't consider or perhaps appreciate that inter-collegiate sports has for years provided the source of supply of athletes to professional, Olympic and other high-level teams who would falter and ultimately die without collegiate involvement. As well, they apparently did not appreciate or care that athletes at the high school level would largely be deprived of the ability to effectively continue in their athletic endeavours. It further would appear that the authors have no care or concern about the University of Alberta standards

which are considered to be of the highest in Canada for athletic endeavour. Apparently, they don't give a damn about "spirit" or high standards.

Usually, it is those who are incapable of excelling at anything that endeavour to abolish high levels of achievement. The comments of Stewart White and Company are the cries of a few who aspire to mediocrity.

Karen Ross  
Engineering I



# Aspidistra

by Alison Thomson

A great deal of attention has been focused, here and elsewhere, on the lack of ability of undergraduates to write the English language so it can be understood by others. This is quite appropriate; a great deal more attention should be focused on the problem, with the ultimate end of making writing competence a requirement for university entrance.

I won't, at this time, dwell on the appalling effect this would have on the number of *Gateway* staff.

No, what I want to comment on today is the broader implication of requiring some ability in English, but not in math or science.

Requiring English is commendable; more than that, it is necessary. It does not, however, go far enough. There is a body of knowledge which is held in common by those persons who deem themselves educated, or whom others deem educated. It is clear that this knowledge is expected; one would certainly be somewhat startled were one to discover a university professor, say, who looked blank at the mention of Shakespeare. And one would not expect to have to find an English professor to elicit a spark of recognition; one would expect this knowledge in a professor of civil engineering, even.

This body of knowledge is fairly wide ranging. One would, at minimum, expect a reasonable conversance with literature, with the affairs of the country and the world, with at least western history, and a good deal more. Science fiction author Robert Heinlein lists in one of his books a strange assortment of things he concludes human beings ought to be capable of, including changing a baby, piloting a spaceship, and solving a differential equation. "Specialization is for insects," he concludes.

Where the people who agree thus far often fall down, however, is on a sort of reciprocity. It is easy, and it is certainly justifiable, to eye askance a scientist who has no conversance with English literature, who has read nothing but his own professional journals for the past twenty years, and who is hard put to write a paragraph in grammatical, properly spelled and punctuated English. These sorts of people exist, although perhaps more of them are to be found in the professions than in the pure sciences.

These people are often abashed about their own lack, and will go to some lengths to avoid having it discovered. Certainly one of my reservations about studying in a professional faculty is the lack of exposure to ideas in other fields, and the difficulty of maintaining an intelligent interest in current affairs.

People specializing in the arts, however, seem to feel far too often that there is something commendable about knowing nothing of the sciences, in looking blank at the mention of thermodynamics.

Scientific knowledge is every bit as important to have some familiarity with. It is more difficult, since large amounts of scientific knowledge depend on facility with maths which many non-scientists lack. This is not, however, the only reason for their ignorance. Much of biology requires little or no math for comprehension, for example, and yet the same blank look is encountered when meiosis is discussed.

No, all too frequently, there is a sort of pride in ignorance, in being too high-minded, perhaps, to grapple with the problems presented to us by the workings of our own bodies, or by the earth.

All of us, in whatever field, need a rather larger dose of openmindedness when considering fields other than our own. Narrow specialization, and pride in narrow specialization, simply isn't on.

## Close RATT for good

Yesterday RATT opened for business again. And you can bet that tonight it will be filled up with a bunch of drunken slob that call themselves students. The serving of alcohol on campus should have been allowed to stop forever after last month's bloody incident.

The university never seems to learn that alcohol and students don't mix. Students are supposed to be cramming their heads with knowledge. When students are permitted or even encouraged to drown their brains in booze, they are defeating their purposes. Through allowing the Students' Union (which is in financial trouble) to serve alcohol on campus, the university is encouraging students to support the poor Students' Union by buying (and consuming) lots of drinks.

Everyone would benefit from the closure of RATT. The Students' Union would not have such high repair bills, because there wouldn't be any drunk vandals around to break glass. The students would benefit, because they would not have the temptation of drinking. Some would say that this is no benefit, but then they probably have not considered how much time they have lost in the bar drinking and in bed with a hangover. The university would not lose any money paying for

injuries incurred to security personnel.

On the other hand, the university probably benefits more from allowing students to drink a lot and fail a few classes; the benefit comes when students have to retake classes and pay for extra terms of tuition. The university should stop thinking of its financial situation and take a responsible stand by closing the bar in RATT for good.

Brad A. Ristle  
Phys Ed IV

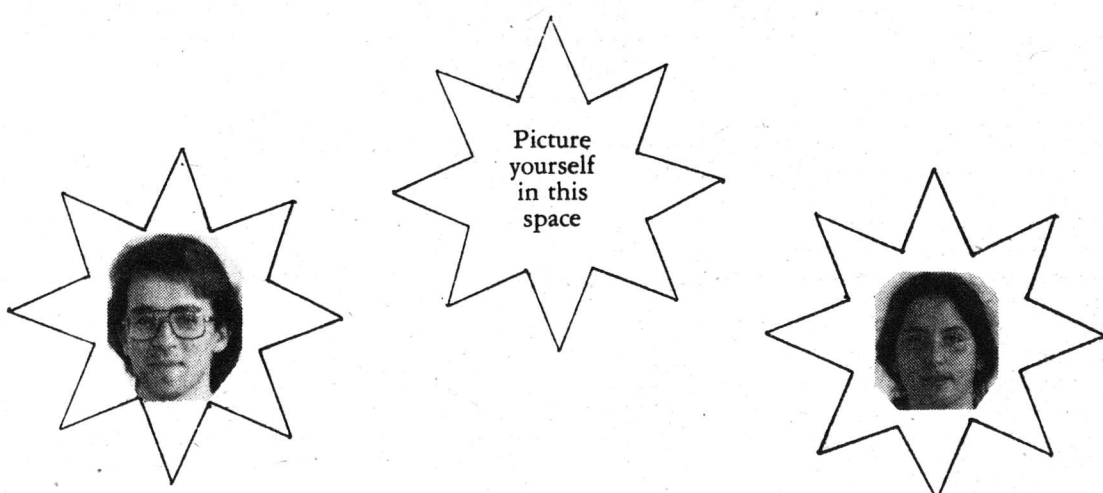
## Sightless

I wish again to remind members of the campus community that several pairs of prescription eyeglasses have been turned into our Lost and Found Department over the past few months.

Unfortunately there is no identifying information to help locate the loser.

In view of the very high cost of replacing eyeglasses, persons who lose/mislay them are urged to contact us at 432-5252 in the event that they have been turned in here.

W.F.G. Perry  
Director  
Campus Security and Traffic



EDMONTON (CUP) - Scandal rocked the U of A campus yesterday when staffers at the *Gateway* revealed they only write for the newspaper so they can see their names in print.

"It's true, it's true!" admitted editor Keith Krause. "I can't sleep properly unless I know that somewhere 18,000 people are reading my byline," he whimpered, adding "That's Krause with an e."

Arts editor Nina Miller issued a shocking statement. "I'm a junkie... I'm hooked on fame and the *Gateway* is my dealer!"

Even newswriter Karen Kebarle admitted...

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