

EDITORIAL

Departments redundant

There is a definite lack of communication between the provincial English Departments. Structural changes must be made to alleviate the present inconsistencies in curriculum preparation.

By 1987, students who fail a writing competency exam will be denied admission to the University. The exam will not necessarily be the one presently given to all first year students; it could be the recently instigated high school competency exams or a totally different exam altogether - nobody knows for sure.

This indecision stems from the same reasons why nobody claims responsibility for the incompetence problem. There exists within the structure of the educational system an extremely convoluted and disjointed circle of responsibility.

The universities train the high school teachers, the teachers train the students, then the students go to university, inadequately prepared - and are then badly trained to educate the next generation.

These university exams make the high-school matriculation program effectively redundant. A student's high school marks mean nothing if he doesn't pass the exam.

It is especially embarrassing for high school teachers because their judgement is now regarded as useless - one student who won a high school English award went on to fail the writing competency exam.

University of Alberta VP Academic George Baldwin says that "high school graduates' writing incompetency is a problem throughout the Western world."

Would this suggest a need for change? Dr. Mary-Jo Williams of the Alberta Teachers Association doesn't think there is a problem at all, saying, "no documentation has been presented saying English skills have gone down."

Yet 44 per cent of students failed the exam this year. This would suggest there is a definite lack of writing competence. Right?

Not according to Edmonton Public School Board representative Theresa Ford who says "the writing competency exams test only a small part of what is taught in the high school curriculum." She was referring to language usage skills and structure skills. Mary Jo Williams adds to this, "the secondary language arts curriculum has changed to meet the needs of society... it now involves listening, viewing and speaking as well as writing."

Simply stated, the new improved high school curriculum does not prepare matriculation graduates for what the University thinks is most important - writing skills.

The overused metaphor of the tail wagging the dog applies perfectly in this case. There is not enough communication between the Department of Advanced Education and the Department of Education. Education is cumulative. The situation as it stands now is not conducive to the teaching of English in a systematic manner.

The departments should be combined. This would provide for the instigation of a decent coherent education system.

The system would be able to develop high-school curriculum which is responsive to the University's desires. There would be a way to determine responsibility thus enabling solutions to problems much easier.

The educators are trying to overcome the inconsistencies in priorities now. A combined Department of Education would not have allowed the problem to arise.

Ken Lenz

Bad move, Pete

A few weeks ago the provincial government raised our income taxes by 13 per cent. Now the provincial government is going to be using 220 million dollars of that income tax money to make sure the Heritage Trust Fund keeps on growing. Nice of them isn't it. Cut back the Social Services and then save the money for no known intelligent purpose. Cute guys.

Not only is the Fund being mismanaged, it is often earning less than the rate of inflation. But adding to an already massive fund is criminal. The money could be utilized either to retain needed services, or to stimulate the economy.

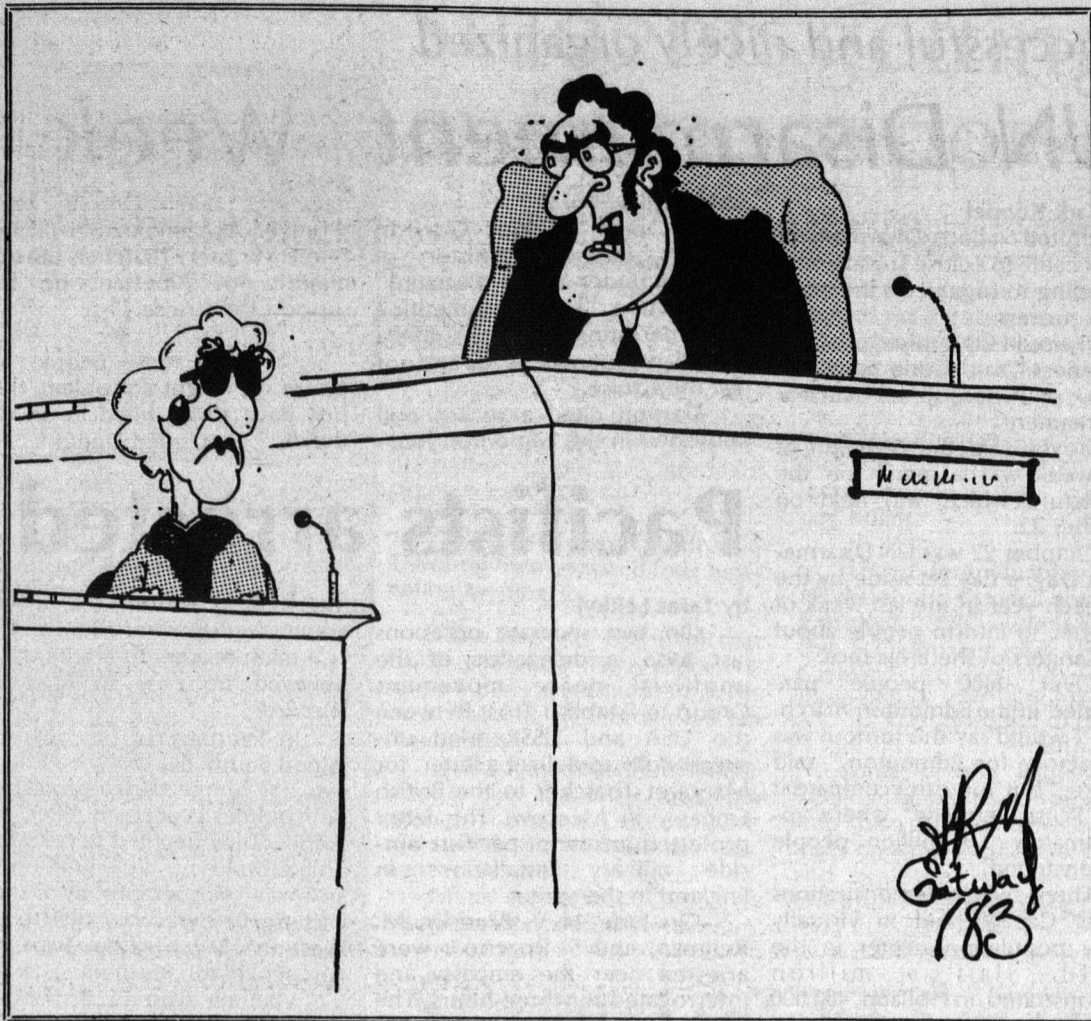
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Staff this Issue

Mervin J. Jungle, high priest of Gilbertology, looked in his magic mirror and saw Robert Greenhill stacking blocks with Neal Watson and Terry Lindberg, right besides Mike Walker and Kent Cochran too mature for those silly games (so they took turns pounding Brenda Waddle and Taras Lehyj over the head with Tinkertoys). Then (horrors) Michael Wynne actually talked to Bonnie Zimmerman who got Jim Moore and Ian Ferguson's sympathy, (at discount price). And you know what? He did even see Jordan Peterson, but that's life. May the Gilbert be with you, and a hundred chickens domicile in your attic

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What do you mean, "Whatsit to ya?"

« LETTERS TO THE EDITOR »

Same old pro-choice

I think it is about time to quit baiting poor Warren Opheim. The froth is showing, even if he isn't seized with convulsions at the sight of water.

If he cannot distinguish between the laws made by society as a whole and the choices made by individuals, that is his problem. And if he chooses to dismiss me as pro-abortionist and stupid, he has made no fatal mistakes...this time. But he really should take a clear look at the corequisites of his position.

By the way, I must admit that Warren did make one accurate guess in his last letter. I probably am making Mr. Spock turn over in his grave. However, I believe it would be due to a rather more esoteric creative endeavour than my attempts to augment the English language. One that Warren, unless I very much misjudge him, will never hear of.

Kathleen Moore
 Business III

What beautiful irony! The Nov. 1 Gateway featured a letter naming one pro-abortionist an "idiot," and a "numbskull," while another stated that "debate on abortion has increasingly relied on name calling...." The first letter, by Warren Opheim, cuts down Kathleen Moore in defense of his Oct. 18 letter. His defense seems to rely more heavily on personal attacks against Ms. Moore: "Stupidity, thy name is Kathleen Moore." Yup! Her IQ is the main issue! Next to his letter is that of pro-choicer Denise Burrell, who sticks with real facts and issues. Mr. Opheim, by lowering himself to name calling, defeats his purpose, presumably to "convert" people to the pro-life side (or is it to raise controversy?). Yet I myself am against abortion, and feel saddened when pro-lifers, like Mr. Opheim, reduce themselves to a religious fanaticism that resorts to name calling, not reason. This is no doubt also true on the other extreme with the pro-choicers. A more reasonable approach is called for.

Derrick Moore
 Science II

P.S. Hey readers, lay off of Jens Andersen. I think he just wants to raise a fuss and make people think about issues. I mean, he couldn't possibly believe everything he writes....or, could he???

Same old pro-life

In regard to Denise Burrell's letter (Nov. 1), I agree the debate on abortion relies mainly on name-calling and illogical rhetoric, but that's as far as I can agree with her.

Granted there is a definite difference between a fetus and a new-born child, but the difference is only in regards to physical maturity and is no more different than the difference between a new-born child and an adult.

I've heard it argued that the difference between a fetus and an "out-of-the-womb child" is much like the difference between an acorn and an oaktree. Surely an acorn is not an oaktree by the furthest stretch of the imagination! And I agree!

An acorn is like a gamete though, not a fetus, it is only after germination (or fertilization) that it becomes an oak. Really, once sprouted what difference is there except for physical appearance due to lack of maturity?

The "pro-abortionist" argument is as Denise stated, women have a right to make choices regarding their own bodies. Fine, but abortion decrees the destruction of the unborn child's body, not hers! Does she really have this right? Sure the unborn child is dependant on her, but if it is right (or allowed) to terminate this dependence, why not terminate the dependancy once the child is born by starving the child of necessities such as food, protection and love?

One must realize it is easier to agree with abortion once born (and if male, I admit) but if you really think abortion is justifiable, ask people and find out how many wish they were aborted, then look at the number of abortions performed each day in Edmonton alone. If only the unborn were physically capable of screaming in pain during the process of abortion, there would be no debate!

Lance Wilson
 Science III

P.S. By the time a women knows she's pregnant, the fetus does feel pain.

Re: Denise Burrell's letter, Nov. 1.

Denise, I am sorry that I misled you somewhat by "unjustly" accusing one of making a feeble excuse to slaughter. In that accusation, I neglected to point out that I was referring to the reasons given, for having abortions, by three women at the hearing of "Doctor" Morgentaler, quoted in my letter of Oct. 18.

I am intrigued, though, by your statement that "a woman who chooses to have an abortion usually does so after a lot of soul searching and pain." I am intrigued, not by the validity (or invalidity) of the statement, but by your mention of a woman deciding to have an abortion going through pain. I understood that pro-abortionists believe that abortions were to relieve any pain. But why should they feel any pain at all? Is there a fear in she who decides in favor of abortion, that she might be killing a human being, a person?

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LETTERS

Letters to the Editor should be no more than 250 words long. They must be signed and include faculty, year of program, and phone number. No anonymous letters will be published. All letters should be typed, or very neatly written. We reserve the right to edit for libel and length. Letters do not necessarily reflect the views of the Gateway.