

Kevin Law

Print not dead yet



The recent controversy surrounding Iran's condemnation of Salman Rushdie's novel *The Satanic Verses* reminds me of a somewhat comical arctic phenomenon.

Every year, millions of lemmings migrate vigorously across the northern tundra, triggered by some unquestioned, single-minded purpose. Upon reaching the ocean cliffs, they continue their obsessive journey by throwing themselves into the salt sea to rapidly thrash about in all directions toward the unattainable horizon.

That image comes to mind as a sad parallel to the fundamentalist Muslim reaction toward a mere novel. Were the book an outlandish biographical lie on the

life of the revered Islamic prophet Muhammad, verbal condemnation would be justified. But no one has the right to incite violence upon another for using freedom of speech, particularly where a work of imaginative fiction is concerned.

Interestingly, it is not Rushdie's book that is inciting hatred and violence. Rather, violence against the author and publishers of the book has been stirred up by the leader of a militant theocracy in an attempt to "defend" and export religious revolution. This in turn has led to literally millions of Muslim followers throwing themselves over a cliff into a sea of righteousness where they thrash about in anger.

All this is no less than intellectual terrorism. Rather than enter into a meaningful dialogue to peacefully educate people about Muslim disagreements with the novel, Khomeini is using fear to do the dirty work for him.

What we get are book burnings, vandalism, threats on book store employees, and a price on the head of the author. Such attitudes and acts ultimately serve to heighten racial prejudice, not reduce it. Iran, and fundamentalist Muslims for that matter, cannot expect to be taken seriously when they fail to respect international standards of behavior.

Many horrid things have been done in the name of religion, but with the maturation of civilization, one would hope that organized institutions would mature too.

Several months ago Christians expressed their unhappiness at the perceived blasphemous interpretation of Jesus in the Scorsese film *The Last Temptation of Christ*, but they didn't demand the death of the film's producers.

Were it not for the artificially created furor, *The Satanic Verses* would have slipped barely noticed into the clearance shelf of intellectual fiction that only appeals to the critics and the British literary social set that Rushdie is himself a part of.

At least one important point has floated to the top of this polemic morass for all to see. Print is not dead yet. It still has a far ranging power that should be protected.

As usual, Canada wimped out for a moment when the government stopped import of the fictional book until it could be reviewed as "hate literature." Other countries have cowered to fear further by throwing the book out for good.

Next time may we all be stronger.

Opinion

Studio Theatre neglected

I am writing to you to protest the absence of a review for Studio Theatre's production of Anton Chekhov's *The Cherry Orchard*, which was performed from Feb. 2nd to 11th. This is Studio's 40th anniversary season and I would have thought that such an important event at the U of A's main theatre would have merited the attention of *The Gateway*. Instead, you filled your issues with reviews of shows at Nexus, Phoenix, Theatre Network, and The Citadel. I think it is great that your staff can motor around town to see all these different plays, but can't even make the effort to walk down the road to see a show at Corbett Hall! I also find it interesting that *The Journal* and *The Sun* both took the time to review *The Cherry Orchard*, but the University's own newspaper did not. While outside events are important, I feel that as the official newspaper of the U of A, you should give preference to events happening on this campus.

Andrew McCreedy
Education IV

Editor's Note: A review of The Cherry Orchard was assigned to a writer who failed to turn in the story. By the time it became apparent that this failure had occurred, it was too late to re-assign the story.

Gay discrimination no longer "safe"

February 16, GAYWIRE was pre-empted by CJSR's hockey coverage of FACE-OFF '89, when the U of A Golden Bears played the NAIT hockey team...

Let me just tell you what happened last year at a Cheer Challenge hockey game. And if you're not familiar with the Cheer Challenge — the noisiest section of the arena wins a "prize" from Molson's.

Sounds like good fun, more people turn out good spirit — for the athletes and crowd alike — right? Well not for one hockey player.

In last week's *Gateway*, on the front page, Randal Smathers reported on some of the goings-on at hockey games:

"Twenty-two's a fag, twenty-two's a fag."

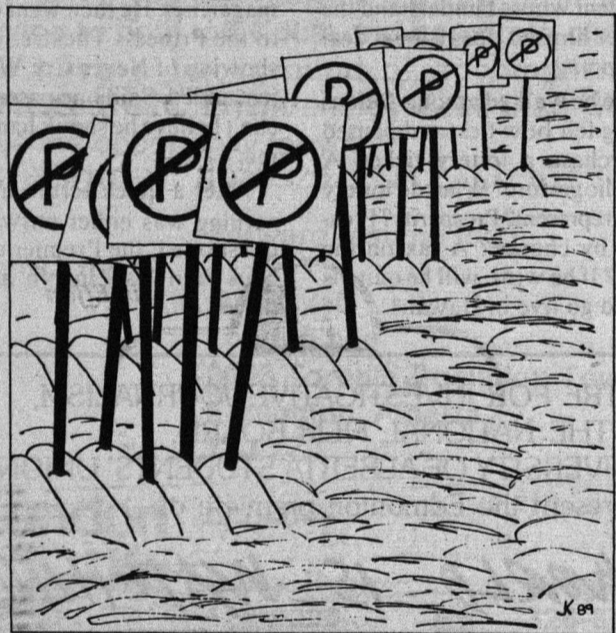
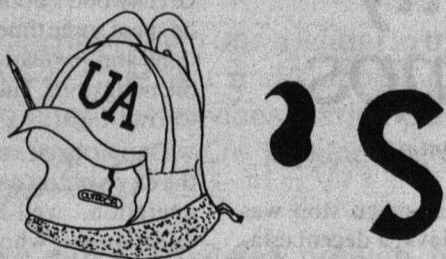
Beliefs unproven

Re: Belief a sin? (Feb. 14)

Cam Bolzer and others like him are not labelled "closed-minded" because their beliefs are "un-fashionable," they are labelled closed-minded because they are convinced those beliefs are correct when, in fact, they have no reason to think so.

Religious thought is based on beliefs, not on facts. Although it is true that facts are often slipped in to augment strong beliefs and fallaciously convert them into facts, it is the beliefs that are at the foundation. The narrow-mindedness exists because the people who hold such beliefs refuse to test and thus in some way validate them. For example how many religious types (Christians, Moslems, Jews, etc.) would be willing to stop believing in a god, participate in any form of religious function, and generally abandon their religion for a period of, let's say, 10 years? Probably none — their way of thinking won't allow it. But this is exactly the type of

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PARKING SIGN RESEARCH AT THE UNIVERSITY FARM

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CONTRIBUTORS

JENNIFER YIP CHOY, ERIC BAICH, JIM GIBBON, S. HENDERSON, MARG ACKERMAN, ELAINE OSTRY, AJAY BHARDWAJ, ROBERTA FRANCHUK, PHILLIP PREVILLE, BRENT PEDERSON, WINSTON PEI, JIM KNUTSEN, JOHN KEREKES, RACHEL SANDERS, ROSS GRAY, DAVID DUDAR, OSCAR STRELKOV, JASON BODNAR, RON SEARS, ROB GALBRAITH, COLIN NORTHCOTT.

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