

King's proposal merits more than gut reaction

Re: "King rejected by his court"
I read with mixed feelings the article written by Mike Walker captioned as above that appeared on Thursday, March 12 in the *Gateway*.

Education Minister Dave King's proposal for a new certification program for teachers graduating from the U of A should be given a second thought. The Education faculty's reaction to this proposal is no doubt impulsive. To my mind, his proposal has more meaning than some people in the faculty might think.

Inasmuch as I don't condone three-year programs in professional studies like education, engineering, medicine and what-have-you, a considerable amount of the practical aspect would certainly be needed for good work to be done. Teaching practice, as I know it, is a very vital requirement for any potential teacher. It is my belief that the way of imparting knowledge to pupils is just as important as the depth of the knowledge itself. A learned graduate teacher who cannot relay his immense knowledge to his pupils is much worse than one with limited knowledge but of immense practical approach.

In my country Sierra Leone, graduates from disciplines other than education who want to teach do a year's course in education at the university, leaving with their

degree and a diploma in education. On the other hand, students in education do two terms (6 months) teaching practice in schools: three months in their qualifying year and another three months in their final year. In either case, the degree program lasts for four years.

This long term ensures that inherent problems like nervousness, fear, confusion, and bad pupil-teacher interaction in teaching are allayed or even eliminated. Many dropouts from schools are due to the lack of confidence pupils have in some teachers who cannot adequately convince them in their approach. Graduates from faculties like engineering, economics, etc., who cannot find appropriate employment opportunities, find themselves teaching in schools.

Such people are normally paid much less than qualified, trained teachers. This in fact discourages people from teaching without having previously been trained as teachers.

Whilst I do not attempt to suggest our own methods for the situation here, any program that will ensure an appreciable length of teaching practice period would augment the academic quota to produce a good teacher.

Hadji Dabo
Grad Studies

Shoddy research unacceptable

Universities exist, we are told, for teaching and research, and, by doing those things, they are intended to serve the community. Most of us know something about teaching, but what is research?

Traditionally, research has been conceived as something solid and physical. Indeed, most of our preconceptions about research derive from the physical sciences: research in education has long suffered from a misapprehension among educators that to make themselves academically respectable they ought to imitate the scientists. Too often educational researchers have been misled into doing "quick and dirty" research in which a weak hypothesis is propped up by an equally shaky questionnaire.

Regardless of what the

researcher thinks of such shoddy methods, he convinces himself that he has to get his research done somehow and that this will get the job finished as painlessly as possible. In these days when computers are available to everyone, he does not even have to add up the results. And presto! Another doctorate is produced. These comments have been made about educational researchers, but the same point can be made about sociology or political science.

In recent times an attempt has been made to look at alternative approaches to research. The new approaches are called, variously, 'qualitative,' 'ethnographic,' 'thick description,' and 'soft research.' The work of George Spindler, for example, allows educators to see the con-

SECOND WIND

by Brent
Jeffery

Second Wind is a now-you-see-it-now-you-don't column of opinion open to all Gateway staff. It does not necessarily reflect the views of other staff members.

Good old Edmonton, never a dull moment when it comes to civic politics. The latest controversy rearing its ugly head is that of the infamous convention center. Recent disclosures claim that the cost of the center, initially set at \$32 million, has now risen to around \$81 million. The question, therefore, that one must ask themselves is "Who cares?"

Edmontonians last fall in their true wisdom voted overwhelmingly in favor of the proposed convention center, effectively silencing Ed Ewasiuk and Co. Barely six months later we have "The Edmonton Group for Conservationalism and Backwardness" (otherwise known

as the Edmonton Voters' Association) trying to force yet another plebiscite on the issue. Ridiculous! What makes them think that we will change our minds?

Edmontonians have unequivocally decided that they would like, and want, a convention center. This center will bring such monies into Edmonton as befitting this growing city. It will serve the community with the inclusion of a 6 - 7,000 seat auditorium, acoustically perfect like the Jubilee. It will be a show-piece for Edmonton, enhancing the otherwise dull river valley. The center, in short, is progress and progress is good.

The most threatening aspect of this issue are the groups that are trying to bury it. If Edmonton is to ever grow up it must be allowed to progress. The past is gone and there is no sense living in it. To

thwart change just because it is change is narrow-minded and dangerous to the community. It appears that these are the policies advocated by such groups as the Edmonton Voters' Association and URGE, a status quo "Let's go back to the huts" group if there ever was one.

The convention center must proceed and be completed in its original form without further speculation. The cost must be borne with no cutting corners, because to have a second-rate convention center is worse than none at all.

To ensure that this cost escalation does not occur to this extent again, an inquiry should be made into how and why this happened and what we can do in the future to prevent its recurrence but to consider abandoning the project at this date is self-defeatist and utter nonsense.

All's well again at Faculte

I would like to comment on the letter of Monica Loughlin of February 18. That epic attempts to create certain impressions which may be misleading.

I take issue with the remark that the response of the administration of Faculte St. Jean to the students' complaints is publicly believed to be less than receptive. To date, the faculty's administration has instituted many

changes. These make the program of studies much more responsive to the students' needs while upgrading the already high standards of Faculte St. Jean.

I do not feel that our problems were due to the type of bureaucratic indifference typical of some faculties, either. Rather, they were due to the change of deans and of department heads and the sudden and dramatic change in enrolment which has taken place in the last two years.

I feel that another problem was one of over-reaction to these problems due to poor channels of communication. Both students and faculty members have received misleading or false information in the course of this school year. Most of these problems have been solved, and the atmosphere of St. Jean has returned to its usual cooperative state.

It is the responsibility of the students who are alleged to represent their peers to facilitate communication between staff and students, not to pretend to represent some Nixon-type "Silent Majority." It is laughable to suggest that the 64 students who felt obliged to hold a separate meeting (in order to even get the attention of a students' association which had little rapport with its constituency) are less representative of themselves than their beloved president who was literally howled out of the above-mentioned meeting.

Finally I would suggest that Ms. Loughlin either spell out what she means by such strange and ungrammatical remarks as "... certain students who have personal conflicts against the administration" or refrain from such rumor-mongering in future. The spreading of rumors has been no help at all...

If I may, in closing, make a related comment: contrary to some peoples' beliefs, I have never before this letter written anything on this subject. An article which was written in French was done with my knowledge (I was asked if my name could be used in it).

I am not even sure who wrote the others, but I could make some damn good guesses as I am not so isolated from my fellow students as are certain jugglers of statistics (Don't you just love the sound of that?!). As poor as my written French is, however, I will not object to the rumor that I wrote that article. Such compliments, hilarious as they may be, are few and far between.

I am pleased to state to the entire university community that Faculte St. Jean is not a lumbering bureaucracy and it has apparently resolved its problems in a friendly, non-vindictive spirit.

What the hell is "conflicts against" supposed to mean, anyway?!

Manuel Miles
Faculte St. Jean

Needed Editors Wanted

The Gateway is in dire need of filling next year's editorial positions:

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nection between anthropology and education; Ray Rist's 'ethnographic' approach led him to spend eighteen months in a school classroom in order to detail the precise ways in which white teachers put black pupils in their place.

A great deal has been written lately concerning participant observation and its application to education. Much of this work has relevance for other disciplines — history, sociology and political science, for instance — in which pointless questions have led to pointless research in the past in the form of badly thought-out scales, surveys, and questionnaires.

A graduate seminar on qualitative research will be held at this University from 3rd to 6th May. The seminar will bring together a number of those whose researches are worth attention. They include Dr. Egon Guba (Indiana), Dr. Geoffrey Isherwood (McGill), Dr. Valerie Janesick (SUNY), Dr. Yvonna Lincoln (Kansas), Dr. Gerry McLeod (OISE), and Dr. Harry Wolcott (Oregon).

Most of the sessions will be informal, and discussion groups have been emphasized. The seminar is being planned by a graduate committee chaired by David Bird of the Department of Educational Administration. Visiting speakers and participating students will be billeted out for the duration of the conference.

Those of us planning the conference do not believe that there is one way to do research, or even that there is one best way. We do stand firmly against weak research of whatever type, and we believe researchers should be aware of the multiplicity of approaches that are now available to them. We hope to debate the merits of both 'hard' and 'soft' research at the seminar: graduate students interested should contact us in the Department of Educational Administration.

Peter West
Grad Studies

Win a few, lose a few

You might call this somewhat of a paper review. I'd firstly like to praise the March 3rd article entitled "Scientific hiring in vogue" for the quality of its writing. I found it extremely



amusing and well thought out. However, I was disappointed in the review of the book *Desperate People* and equally unimpressed with the same reviewer's comments on the film *Dogs of War*. Both reports read more like book reports than critiques, with a predominance of contextual detail and a distinct lack of discussion of artistic merit. Being an avid film goer and book reader, I enjoy good

reviews. Hopefully the quality will improve in the future.

Dave Lickley
Zoology Department
P.S. Please pass on my praise to the author of the 'hiring' article as their identity was not divulged. Thank you.

Managing Editor's Note: "Scientific hiring in vogue," which through an oversight was not credited, was picked up through the features service of Canadian University Press.

LETTERS

Letters to the *Gateway* should be a maximum of 250 words on any subject. Letters must be signed and include faculty, year and phone number. Anonymous letters will not be published. All letters must be typed, though we will reluctantly accept them if they are very neatly written. We reserve the right to edit for libel and length. Letters do not necessarily reflect the views of the *Gateway*.