

editorial

Last Friday we elected a new Students' Union executive. Thursday, next year's *Gateway* editor will be selected. Therefore it seems like an appropriate time to examine the roles of student government and student journalism and the relation between them.

The role of student government is to serve the students. Agreed, that is a nebulous statement but it is the first thing our new executive should consider when they make decisions. Many people would agree with that statement and use it as an excuse for concentrating on student services and ignoring political action. Yet the political interests of the students, as students, cannot be handled by anyone else and student government must take that responsibility. Nor are student interests the only thing that students have in common. Student government does not have to repeat services and interests available elsewhere but it would be missing the larger part of life if it did not consider issues that affect students as people.

The limits on what student government should do are what it can do. Free and unlimited services cannot be supplied. When student government goes beyond its means it jeopardizes the ability to provide services that should be possible. There is a similar situation with political action. When student government aims for goals it cannot achieve, it risks the credibility necessary for other action.

Bloody obvious but what should they be doing? Well at least these are some guidelines to work within. The rest is up to the good judgement of the executive and council. They cannot be satisfied with competently managing the day-to-day affairs of the Students' Union; they must be alert to what is happening on and off campus and they must understand how it affects the people they serve.

Service must be more than doing what they think the people want. It must include doing what is good for them. Most students, like most people, have a limited perspective on issues. Very few have the resources and the information available to student government. Leaders must not be afraid to go against the majority of the people.

Informing the students is where student journalism comes in. It too must look to the needs of the students. It too must look beyond the university and bring the rest of life to the students. And it too should use its advantageous position to advise and lead students. All this, keeping in mind what is possible.

This gives us the lovely picture of student government and student journalism hand in hand leading the students with their best judgment. Unfortunately, their best judgment, is still far from perfect judgment. Thus student journalism and student government must be apart. Not in separate bunkers firing at each other (as is too often the case) but far enough apart to evaluate each other. If one group feels it must correct the other it must be careful; correcting does not mean trying to destroy.

Mr. (for we must show respect for each other) Olmstead and his crew must use their best judgment on what to take action on and what action to take. The limits of their potential are wide and so are the limits of their responsibility. I believe the *Gateway* has tried to meet its responsibilities and I hope it will continue to do so next year.

Kent Blinston
for the editorial board

the Gateway

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If it happens on campus it's news to us.

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Poetry critic found offensive

It is unfortunate that in her article on the Canadian poet Eli Mandel, Rosaleen Moran chose to unnecessarily supplement her critique of his poetry with bigoted, sweeping statements about Jews in general and Jewish writers in particular.

She accuses Mandel of using words like "Jewishness" and the "Jewish Holocaust" to "elicit a sympathetic response". Perhaps these words should be replaced with less connotative

terms, such as "that singular quality which people of the Hebrew persuasion seem to have", or "that unfortunate incident which occurred during World War II. But I am rather perplexed by Ms. Moran's reference to the "Jewish Race." Is that like the Christian race? Is it a foot race? Or maybe hurdles?

I would also like to know where Ms. Moran discovered that "articles, books and poems which refer to problems of the Jewish people, written by Jewish writers, are fast coming to be regarded as the 'Psychiatric Couch' of Israel, and are as predictable as snow in January." On what does she base "the fact that their everlasting, cathartic bitterness no longer holds anyone's interest except their own?"

A cursory glance and the important literature and authors of our time (such as recent Nobel prize-winners Isaac B. Singer and Saul Bellow, not to mention Mordechai Richler, Chaim Potok, Woody Allen, Herman Wouk, etc. etc.) more than suffices to show that the Jewish public finds Jewish authors and subjects more interesting than ever before. So interesting, in fact, that no Jews have begun to move into Jewish territory (James Michener's *The Source* Bergman's *The Serpent's Egg*). Unfortunately, Ms. Moran's comments demonstrate that anti-Jewish bigotry still exists, even at the University of Alberta.

Jessica Singer
Arts

Death to the sheik

I was saddened to read in *Gateway* Jan. 30 the full page advertisement for prophalactics. That the view of morality as "old-fashioned inhibition" has pervaded our culture is all too apparent. The view is unfortunate because morality is timeless; it is based on laws of human nature and relationships that can never change. One of these laws is that sexual contact other than in a marital relationship robs such a relationship of the special intimacy that is possible only if both partners have reserved sexual contact for each other. As a result, sex loses much of its meaning outside a marriage. The indulgent attitude portrayed in this advertisement is but another of the mistakes of the "play-now, pay-later" society we live in. I hope that the *Gateway* will respect the wishes of those students on this campus who do not wish to see this type of advertising in their student newspaper.

Ross Smillie
Science II

GASP can choke

I am appalled by the present "anti-smoker" movements like GASP. I realize, as a pipe-smoker, that others might be made uncomfortable by my exhaust emissions and so rarely smoke in public. If I want to smoke in public, however, I have the right to bloody well do so (I mean, so what if I offend people, hey? They often offend me without ever once having lifted a cigarette). By damn, I'm a citizen too and I'll be dipped in dog-dung if I'm gonna let somebody try to infringe on my freedom to light up a bit of shag now and then.

It almost looks like prohibition years are upon us again; there are ads on TV warning us not to drink, to quit smoking at all costs, and growing organized movements designed to restrict or eliminate these "vices" once and for all. Well, people, I'm not buying this garbage that these organizations are doing these things to protect our health exclusively. There is latent contempt in these groups for the rights of us smoking drinkers (drinking smokers?). Their condescending paternalist attitude and "for your own good" policies are masks for their need to exert bureaucratic control measures over another group, to string up the non-conformists with red tape instead of the more obvious hangman's noose.

Remember the image of the prohibitionists of the thirties? Well look around you; these people are alive and well, and handing out leaflets.

Larry Harley Hashman
Pharmacy I

Mandel moving

The review of last week's on campus reading by Eli Mandel is a travesty of good critical writing. I attended the reading, and found the works both witty and moving, and I'm not even Jewish.

For the reviewer to suggest that the "search for self" is "useless as poetical material" and "provides nothing of universal impact" is particularly distressing. Great poets of all ages from Chaucer through the Romantics to the Moderns have been concerned with the individual and the self. I can think of nothing that has more universal import — the quest for the self is the true Riddle of the Sphinx which haunts all thinking men.

To further advise that the university should censor poems dealing with "the problems of (our) community" is ludicrous and insulting. It is illogical to

suggest that we edit our lives until we no longer refer to sensitive issues; even the weather arouses anguish for some.

The two suicide poems which so obsessed the reviewer were not insensitive to "the personal despair of others." The methods selected for the work "27 Ways of Committing Suicide" were chosen because their symbolic value—their showed that the act was not just rash impulse but a carefully planned and executed statement by an individual in real pain. Furthermore it was Mandel's sensitivity to the audience that compelled him to read the light "How to Write a Suicide Note" first. More awareness generated by such a blunt emotive statement than by the sprouting of cold dehumanizing government statistics.

The review also stated that the poet "has a responsibility to revere human life." A responsibility dictated by whom? If the poet has any duty at all it is only to be honest, beyond that we can make no demands. It is our right if we find poetry to be bad to refuse to read it. Eli Mandel did not read bad poetry last Thursday and I am saddened and angered that the *Gateway* would see fit to devote a full page to such obviously biased criticism.

Marni L. Stanli
Arts

Letters

Letters to the editor should be addressed to the *Gateway*, Room 282 SUB, Edmonton, or dropped off at our office. Please include your name, student I.D. number (if applicable) and phone number. Please limit letters to 250 words or less. If you wish to write a longer piece, come to see us. We reserve the right to edit all submissions for libel.

Ballot 'approved'

Question: When are the SU elections a farce?

Answer: When a completed ballot is opened by the ballot officer at the voting booth "to make sure that it hasn't been spoiled".

On Friday, February 9, having handed in my ID card at the voting station, I was given a

Fenna slate offers congratulations

We would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Olmstead slate on their election. We were very impressed with the manner in which Mr. Olmstead received us at his victory party, making all of us feel welcome. We would like to reassert our commitment to the Students' Union, and wish the Olmstead executive success in the upcoming year.

Alan Fenna
Bill Tatarchuk
for the Fenna slate

ballot and pencil. In privacy filled out the ballot, folded it and handed it to the ballot officer. To my amazement, this person unfolded the card and scrutinized it. She then refolded it and handed it over to her colleague giving me the astounding explanation that it was necessary to examine ballots since spoiled ballots were not acceptable and new ballot would have to be marked.

Is not the secret ballot of the first democratic rights? Since when have student voters lost the right to mark their ballots the way they see fit and therefore to use a spoiled ballot as a means of registering protest?

Is this alarming incident related to the fact that a political organization advised voters to return spoiled ballots, as a means of registering a protest against vacuous slates with empty programs?

In a state of shock,
Amanda Le Roux
Arts