

Loudmouths vs. free speech

A skilled dramatist could not have conceived of a scene fraught with more irony than that which was played out at the U of A Law Centre this past Friday.

As a class in civil liberties (Law 536) assembled for the last time this term to discuss freedom of expression, a few steps away, students and faculty gathered to sing Christmas carols in the foyer outside the law library. And down an adjacent corridor, a group of anti-Israel protesters stormed into a classroom, disrupting an address given by a guest speaker from Israel (sponsored by Hillel), Col. Yehuda Levy. Hurling slogans such as "racist imperialist fascists have no right to speak or organize," and led by Oscar Ammar, vice-president of the Political Science Students' Association, the protesters banged on walls and desks, refusing to let the speaker continue.

When a member of the attending audience asked Ammar "who is paying you to do this," he sarcastically replied "Russian Communists." The protesters at this demonstration might not have been funded by Moscow, but their verbiage seemed to be taken straight out of Pravda.

Is this how students of political science are encouraged to behave when they wish to voice a grievance? Hillel invested a lot of time and money in bringing Col. Levy to the U of A. Has Ammar not been taught that the fundamental freedoms of expression, peaceful assembly, and association as guaranteed by section 2 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms extends to all Canadians, including Jews?

It seems that the message of Peace on Earth, Good Will Toward Men, is a sentiment which can penetrate neither law school walls nor human hatred. As Ammar and his motley crew of wall-pounders, floor-stompers, and rabble-rousers demonstrated so vividly, the anti-Israel faction on campus is interested neither in civilized discussion of the issues nor an eventual resolution of the disputes which have ravaged the Middle East through decades of war and strife for both Arabs and Jews.

In fact, what it seeks is to voice hostility, aggravate existing tensions, and exploit any opportunity for the suppression of others through its bullying tactics.

Most disgusting of all was the behavior of certain professors, sympathizers of the anti-Israel faction, who attempted to disrupt Col. Levy's presentation long before the placard-carrying loudmouths appeared on the scene.

A university, as a centre of learning, is a chief forum for free and democratic speech and assembly. Those who believe that an opponent is best dealt with by shutting him up do not belong at an institution such as the U of A.

Jessica A. Levental
Law II

Almost every day we are confronted by the media with more stories about the Middle East situation. Since I know little about this situation, I was glad to have the chance to gain more information.

Having recently heard the PLO perspective, I thought it only fair to listen to an Israeli point of view at a forum held on Dec. 3. Unfortunately, this was not to be the case. At the entrance of Law 2-07, I was greeted by the sight of several placard-carrying people. Fine. This is a democracy, and freedom of speech and thought is supposed to be a basis of such a society. To say that I am enraged at the consequent behavior of this group is an understatement.

In all the forums, regarding various topics, that I have been to, there has been a set procedure. The speakers have their say, which is then followed by a question and answer period. At this time dissent is invited to be voiced. How dare these people come barging into the forum and attempt to suppress freedom of speech.

I don't care what their excuse is. Their opinion is not the only one. I have a mind of my own, and I am free to form my own opinions. I will not be dictated to. Unhappily, these people succeeded in shutting down the

forum and I will have to wait to hear other perspectives. It should be interesting to see if the Egyptian speaker is greeted as warmly.

D. Milner, Arts I

Re. last Friday's particularly disgraceful "performance" by Mr. Oscar Ammar and his buddies from the People's Front (whatever that is):

If Prof. Emile Shihadeh did indeed tell the *Edmonton Journal* reporter that "the trouble" began when the invited speaker, Col. Yehuda Levy, "tried to justify the massacres (in the Sabra and Chatilla camps) by saying that the refugee camps sheltered members of the PLO" (see *Edm. J.*, Dec. 4), he obliges me to accuse him of uttering a deliberate falsehood — and I do not lightly call any person a liar, least of all an academic colleague!

As for Mr. Ammar and the People's Front: my own subsequent conversations with some Palestinian students and their sympathizers led me to think that they were as embarrassed by those rowdies as the many others who came to hear Col. Levy (and perhaps take issue with him in a civilized manner).

All in all, I am sure that with "friends" like Mr. Ammar and the People's Front, the Palestinians on the U of A Campus need no other opponents!

N. Berkowitz, Professor
Department of Mineral Engineering

Hillel stifled speech also

As one who attended the recent Hillel-sponsored Levy "talk" last Friday, I feel curiously educated and enlightened regarding the Zionist philosophy in general, and the Israeli-government (with its supporters) in specific — but not, I think, in the manner which was desired. Indeed, I feel that I finally have a specific base understanding of the Israeli-Zionist notion of justice; that is, to fully appreciate this point of view, one apparently must embrace and accept a multi-faceted paradox and contradiction. Among the tenets:

- Crimes against those of Jewish extraction are "holocausts"; crimes against others (read Palestinians) are "dealing with problems."
- Criticism of Hebrews is "anti-semitic"; criticism against Arabs is "protesting hate literature."
- Denial of rights to Jews is "persecution"; denial of rights to Palestinians is "necessary for security."
- Israeli-terrorism (Menachem Begin - 1948, and the state of Israel - 1982) is "justified defense", "necessary war", and "striving to keep their homeland"; Palestinian terrorism is "barbaric", and simply that - terrorism.
- Jewish people are human beings and have a right to a homeland; Palestinians are not, and do not.

Such glaring, rank hypocrisy (as was so manifestly and lucidly exhibited in the shut-down of an Arab information booth recently) serves only to heighten and strengthen the validity of the Palestinian cause and severely cast doubt upon the integrity of its Zionist counterpart. If a bent and perverted justice, coupled with a unilateral dispensation of the same (as is dually evident both in Hillel's demands for freedom of speech while refusing the same liberties for the Arabs, and in the ludicrous and dangerous Students Union one-man censorship board's actions) continued to be the dominant factor in the Zionist viewpoint, one has no choice but to revoke any subsequent credibility and substance awarded it.

Justice is a double-edged sword, and rights travel both ways.
Don Davies, Arts II

Letters to the Editor should be a maximum of 250 words. Letters must be signed, and include faculty, year and phone number. No anonymous letters will be accepted, although we will withhold names. All letters should be typed, although 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*.

CHOPPING BLOCK

by Jens Andersen

A few notes on this and that:

• Ignoramuses and disarmament. The dimbulbs, I should stress, reside on both sides of the issue. Take Greg Madison, who in a letter to the editor last week — two days after I wrote an article saying the film *Diva* is "as hollow as Peter Pocklington" — suggested I would be a willing speaker at some future Pockfest, and, more astoundingly, that I probably agree with Alexander Haig's belief that (to use Madison's words): "We must negotiate from a position of strength."

In fact, I would gently suggest to Mr. Madison that he himself agrees with Mr. Haig on this point (no one has seriously argued for negotiating from a position of weakness, to my knowledge). The question under such hot debate at present is simply how much strength, if any, various nuclear weapons give us.

On the other side of the fence is Ken Shipka, whose letter, supporting cruise missile testing, and whining about "proper and fair journalism" in the *Gateway*, appears in this issue. In fact the *Gateway* prints virtually all the opinions it receives, and if one side preponderates that is simply because that is the way the wind is blowing. If you don't like it, write a letter or become a journalist.

What is blatantly unfair is Shipka's demand that the Student Union support the cruise on the basis of a petition of a mere 363 signatures (from a campus of over 20,000), from which he draws the idiotic conclusion: "students support the Cruise missile." In fact every indication is that the student body is sharply and probably evenly split on the issue, and unless the fact is proved to the contrary the SU has no business lecturing the federal government, or anyone else, on the issue, either for or against.

Shipka's proposal to cut funds from "peace" groups is also indefensible. Personally, I would go even farther than he does in labelling the majority of peaceniks as numskulls (see, for instance, the screamingly illiterate and incoherent letter which one of them wrote today), but the fact is, as long as anyone has some support among the

student body (and the anti-nukes, I'll bet, have more than the *Gateway*) they have a right to SU money.

I could go on about the irrationalities on both sides, but space forbids. Let me conclude by saying that in all significant respects the pro-nukes resemble the anti-nukes: they both suffer from the messianic delusion that they, and they alone, can bring about that phantasm - "world peace", both are manufacturers of gaseous slogans, both spend most of their energies abusing each other, and both studiously avoid the tough pragmatic questions at the core of the nuclear disarmament issue (anyone interested in these should consult the most recent issue of *Scientific American*).


• Pornography. On a recent archeological expedition through a *Gateway* filing cabinet I found some old feminist literature on pornography. All the writers naturally stressed the alleged relationship between porn and sex crimes, a connection which is crucial to any argument to ban porn. There is a correlation, I suspect (proof or disproof, of course, is hard to come by), but one must be wary of jumping to conclusions about cause and effect, as the feminists do.

The correlation could just indicate a burgeoning population of maladjusted males who, incapable of dealing with real women, seek out the fantasy world of porn, rather than porn causing the maladjustment, as the feminists suggest. Or, the causal link could work both ways. Or both porn and maladjustment could be the result of a third factor — say, feminist propaganda.

The feminists, I think, cling to the porn-causes-misogyny argument because it proposes a simple solution to terrifying problems like battering and rape: simply quash the porn. To admit even the possibility that genetics and parental example mold a person into a set personality by adolescence (as I believe) would weaken simple solutions like this, or the other popular "cure" of consciousness-raising, thus leaving no apparent answers. And even more frightening than violence against women is the thought that maybe we really don't have the answers to it. No wonder the feminists clutch at straws.

• Well, there are still a thousand more things to write about, like how my own experiences with the capitalist press and college press disprove the prevalent notion that the former is controlled by advertisers who restrict content, and the latter is a free and open forum for all ideas. But lack of time and space prevents me.

Sometimes the phenomena of the universe are just too much to dissect in one column.



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