

Opinion

Editorial

In defense of apathy

In last Tuesday's issue of *The Gateway*, Tim Enger wrote an article in the sports section called "Staying Away at the U of A." In a nutshell, it was the latest installment in the ongoing "Why aren't people attending U of A sporting events?" series of articles.

In his story, Mr. Enger listed and refuted the various excuses he's heard from students who don't want to attend events on campus. The excuses, which ranged from "The facilities are a joke," to "It's a bunch of dumb jocks", are just that — excuses, and dumb ones at that.

Excuse number six was "I have no time" or "I've got better things to do." Now I don't see this as an excuse, I see it as a legitimate reason. I go to the odd basketball or football game and, for the most part, enjoy myself, but I go because I want to and frankly, I'm getting tired of forever hearing how I *should* be going to these events. I'm tired of the subtle attitude that by not attending sporting events I am somehow less of a student and consequently should be ashamed of myself.

The problem of poor attendance is certainly not limited to the Athletics Department. How many poets and novelists come to speak here and are largely ignored by the general campus population? Are they packing the rafters at Convocation Hall for the music recitals? If apathy is widespread at the U of A, then the Varsity Arena and Gym are no exceptions.

I think Mr. Enger was accurate when he explored the reason why people up here do not support university athletics. He wrote:

"...those crazy Yankees will go to college games simply because they want to. Supporting intercollegiate sports has been part of their culture ever since...the American Revolution. Unfortunately, this hasn't been the case in Canada. It's not part of our culture. We haven't grown up with it."

That's the point. Sports isn't intrinsic to our society — at least not when compared to the United States — but does it make us any less of a nation?

If I may play basement psychologist for a moment, I feel the American attitude toward sports should not be taken as an end in itself; rather I think we should take sports in the larger context as part of the overall behaviour and attitude of America.

America is without a doubt a proud, volatile nationalistic country. The last time a country told them what to do, some 200 years ago, they revolted and haven't looked back since. Americans are used to fighting, and they're used to winning (the Vietnam war being the only possible exception, but Sylvester Stallone is working on that). But, while this pugnacious, confrontationalist attitude is expressed in a healthy way at sporting event, it shows its darker side in the violent crime statistics and in its history of problems being solved through violence. Canada, in comparison, is a little meeker, a little more laid back (some say to the detriment of our cultural identity). Yet by the same token, Canada has a much lower crime rate and we do not have a history of solving problems with the pointy end of a gun. I think there's something to be said for that.

And if you think tying sports attendance to the crime rate is a little tenuous, I direct you to the number of murders that take place in America each year over football arguments. I think this shows us that the only thing America likes better than competition is winning at competition, and this is reflected in their willingness to go completely crazy at something as trivial as a football game.

In his article, Mr. Enger also pointed out: "What better way to fill the gap between dinner and the party than to go to a game? And let's face it, Athletics dream of having problems with alcohol at games. Get it guys?"

Obviously I'm not going to take this quote at face value because that's not how it is meant. While not advocating drunken brawls at games, the Athletics Department, I think, would just like to see more general fan activity, even if it lends itself to a rowdy nature. But more fan activity, as with anything else, has its drawbacks. In Detroit the bleacher section at Tiger Stadium is regularly closed down due to fan violence. And when the Tigers won the World Series a couple of years ago, the jubilant fans rushed out of the stadium and burned automobiles and overturned buses. Of course, I don't think there will ever be a danger of overturned burning buses outside of the Butterdome, but my point is that with lots of fans or few fans, there are always pluses and minuses. And I certainly hope the Athletics Department isn't wishing for the best of both worlds.

One reason Mr. Enger feels baffled by the lack of crowds at the U of A is the popularity of the city's pro sports teams — the Oilers and the Eskimos.

In response to one interviewee who commented that University games were boring, he wrote: "These are people who go to Oilers games, the most exciting team in the NHL, and sit on their hands. I don't think that people who live in this area know what is exciting in sports."

Yes, I believe this is correct. I don't doubt that Golden Bear hockey is better than the usual Oilers vs. Devils fare served up at Northlands Coliseum, but unfortunately the grade of hockey is, to an extent, irrelevant. The majority of people can't appreciate a good hockey game, but masses can't appreciate good films or decent music either. In our society how much something costs — its surface value — is taken as an indication of its actual aesthetic worth. The more professional something looks, the better we think it is. Maybe beauty is only skin deep, but it's amazing how far you can go with it on the planet earth.

So, in summation, while I applaud the efforts of the Athletics Department to get people out to games, and I think it would be nice if the events were well-attended, I don't think it's a big campus-wide shame that they're not. Athletics can complain that people aren't supporting them, but I think I've proven that they aren't the only group in this dilemma. It's a big club, guys. But as I mentioned earlier, they seem to be the only group that feels people *should* rather than *want* to attend their events. And I liken that philosophy to building a boat with a huge gaping hole in its side. You can bail water till you're blue in the face, but if the design itself is what's at fault, she's never gonna float.

Dean Bennett

ONE GOOD USE FOR TERRORISTS...

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Letters to the Editor

Terrorism

Re: Editorial: "Kill the terrorists" from *The Gateway* Tues. Nov. 26/85

Dear Mr. Evans,

Well, here we go again with another misinformed person. I myself, would love to see you take a trip to the West Bank. Some say it was the most beautiful place in the world ten years ago. Now, innocent Palestinians are being bombed, pillaged and tortured at the hands of legal terrorism. So how do we solve the terrorist problem? Since these people are willing to die for their cause, we must get at the root of the problem.

I am in no way condoning the actions of these recent hijackings. These people must be punished, but must everyone generalize about "Arabs"? Moammar Kadafy in no way represents the views of the Arab world. (The terrorists on the Egyptian plane were not Sirian or Palestinian, they were Funisian. When you said you were "changing my (your) opinion on the Israeli bombing of PLO offices in Tunis", you seem to make the Israelis out to be heroes. Three years ago, the Israeli military 'let in' the Christian militia men, who slaughtered and terrorized hundreds of men, women and children. The Israelis have maintained their presence in Lebanon is for the protection of these people, the Palestenians, from their own internal conflict. This is protection? This is terrorism. Your statement "maybe the U.S. should declare war against Libya and blow the sonovabitch up", should have read that the U.S. should stop selling military arms to Israel, and tell them to get out of Lebanon.

When you said you could "empty a large hand gun into the people responsible for taking innocent lives to make a political statement", you were expressing the exact views and feelings of these terrorists. They are responding to terrorists actions done to innocent people, namely the Palestinians. When will this fighting stop? I don't know, but maybe it must be stopped where it all began, and those who started this domino action of war, should pay the price.

SeReena Shdren
Arts I

Ms. Shdren:

I apologize for having identified the hijackers of the Egypt Air jetliner as Syrian and Palestinian: I was using the best sources available to me at the time I wrote the editorial, which were the other news media. I should have been more clear that the identity of the hijackers was only conjecture.

I realize Kadafy does not represent Arab views: he is a paranoid megalomaniac who stands alone.

I agree that Israel should vacate Lebanon — just as the U.S. should vacate Nicaragua. And I have not yet decided the Israeli bombing of Tunis was not criminal.

I hope this clarifies some of the shady areas left by my editorial.

Mike Evans

Selective amnesia

Dear Gateway,

I share Mike Evans' outrage at terrorism defined in terms of "taking human life whenever it is politically expedient". Equipped with such a clear-headed moral definition, however, one is puzzled at the selectiveness with which the editorialist applies it.

Which groups make Mr. E's terrorist hate list? Coloney Khadafy, the IRA, the Palestenians, militant Sikhs and, for good measure, "fanatical, obsessed, independent groups...particularly in the Middle East." A factor common to these groups (as vaguely defined as they appear in the article) is that of a grievance against the international status quo which they feel can only be addressed by recourse to political violence.

But why so picky, Mike? Let's go further to apply our moral outrage at the "taking of human life for political expediency" a little more consistently. Surely any such list of 'terrorist' acts must include:

- The murder of 50,000 non-combatants by U.S.-sponsored security forces in El Salvador since 1980 (Amnesty International);
- Civilian massacres carried out by forces also loyal to the U.S., the 'Contras', against Nicaragua - these killings also number in the thousands;
- Over 800 men, women, and children slaughtered under Israeli supervision at Sabra and Shatila during

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Tim Kihn and Hans Beckers were watching football in RATT when suddenly the screen was filled with Doug Schmidt's home movies. "Look," cried Susan Sutton, "isn't he cute kissing that baby? And hugging that kitten? And squeezing that dolly?" Pat Mazure and Tim Enger began to feel sick, so they sent Don Filipchuk onto the roof to fix the dish. Much to Don's surprise, he found Roberta Franchuk and Kathleen Beechinor already up there, homeless, cold, and only wanting somewhere to watch the adventures of Doug. Just then, Gilbert Bouchard, Louise Hill, and Edna Landreville landed in a cigar-shaped rotating metal thing and asked "Where can we get a good bowl of chili?" Kabir Khan, flying around in his red tights and cape, swept down to scare everyone off the roof with a water pistol, but only managed to make Tim Hellum cry. "Quiet!" yelled Bruce Gardowe from RATT below. "I want to hear the part where Doug nuzzles this bunny. Shut up! Shut up!"

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