

EDITORIAL

Guest editorial writer Luke Peterson, assistant sports editor

It's national "Freedom to Read Week," but I don't feel very free. It seems that everywhere I turn, some person or group is trying, and often with alarming success, to dictate what I may and may not choose to read. While it certainly is kind of others to be so willing to make my decisions for me, I sometimes wonder if these individuals and organizations are perhaps motivated by something other than limitless altruism for their fellow human beings.

Student newspapers across the United States are reporting an increasingly popular form of censorship, whereby offended or outraged students are stealing and destroying papers by the tens of thousands in an effort to prevent the publicizing of views with which they personally disagree. In one case at Pennsylvania State University, the editor of the independent paper *Lionhearted* woke to discover hundreds of copies burning on his front lawn and another 6,000 papers reported stolen, immediately following the publishing of an editorial in the paper, which criticized a feminist column in a rival paper. Apparently the culprits realized all too well that it's pretty damn difficult to read what you can't find.

Closer to home, the good folks at Canada Customs are hard at work to ensure that Canadians are never totally free to choose their own reading material. Under the authority of the Prohibited-Importation's unit, Canada Customs officers, who incidentally receive exactly one half of one day's worth of training in the area of dealing with obscene materials, can seize and detain indefinitely for examination (and often incineration), any literature which they deem to be obscene.

Lest you think that our Customs officials exercise this weighty judgment sparingly and with the utmost care, you should reconsider. These Eagle-eyed moral custodians have, according to one

account cited in *The Globe and Mail*, seized more than 5,000 books and periodicals since 1986. Not content to "merely" seize what they personally deem to be obscenity, Customs officials, in what can only be interpreted as their own determination to not "play favourites," detained feminist author Andrea Dworkin's book *Pornography*, a work that is clearly opposed to pornography and obscenity, and also *Caught Looking*, a feminist textbook about censorship, slated to be used in summer courses at Manitoba, Waterloo and McMaster universities.

Even if an overzealous border patroller fails to restrict your reading freedom by nabbing your textbook, one can pretty much count on various societal factions trying to determine what is suitable material for your perusal.

In Alberta, Victor Doerkson, a Conservative member of the provincial Legislature, has submitted a petition with the signatures of 800 individuals who demand that John Steinbeck's classic novel, *Of Mice and Men* be removed from the libraries of all Alberta schools. According to the Canadian Press, Doerkson, who incidentally admits to not even have read the book, claims that it should be banned because it contains 198 profane words which are considered inimical to Christianity and tend to "

demean or profane the name of God and Jesus Christ." Pretty strong charges from an individual who can't even be bothered to read what he is proposing to censor. Perhaps Albertans may have to begin observing *Freedom to Read Anything Victor Doerkson Deems Appropriate Week*.

I can call the Week what I like, but unfortunately, I'm sure that there will always be someone reading over my shoulder, claiming to be looking out for my "best interests," while actually trying to further their own.

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MUGWUMP

BY
JAMES ROWAN

Top 10 things overheard at UNB polling booths

10. Oh, do we have a Student Union?
9. Gee, that No guy seems to be running for everything.
8. Yes, this is a rather tame election, Mr. Bosnitch.
7. Stop stuffing the ballot boxes, Rowan.
6. What's Yaqzan running for again?
5. Can I write in Lamrock for President?
4. I'm sorry, but you can't vote "no" on Tom Traves.
3. Someone explain the big words on the SUB Referendum to the BoG.
2. Tell van Kaaite we're counting as fast as we can.
1. Student Union? I thought these were the Business Society elections. Never mind.
(with thanks and apologies to TDF and the Iron Digressor)

Okay, so this isn't really a column, it's a pair of top ten lists. Just think of it as a concise statement of all the things I was going to bitch about this week.
- J.R.

Things overheard...

Top 10 things overheard in the Budget Committee Meeting

10. I haven't seen this much cutting since the Lorena Bobbitt trial.
9. I don't even see why we need a budget—CAMPUS gets by just fine without one.
8. \$70,000 for CHSR?! Do you know how many office chairs that would buy?
7. External Affairs? But with my girlfriend on Executive, all my affairs are done in the office!
6. You know, if the University tried to fire us we'd have our budget problems solved through the year 2000...
5. If we give the Business Society everything they ask for, we'll have to raise student fees \$50... so what exactly was the problem here?
4. Can we have hair-gel included in the office supply budget? Okay, how about the health plan?
3. So let me get this straight, the Engineers will only pay for SUB expansion if we expand it right over top of the existing Arts buildings? Would it have a Business Lounge?
2. Y'know, the electricity bill at CHSR is awfully high. If we pulled the plug on their transmitter, I figure we could cut their costs without affecting the audience numbers.
1. Hey, we couldn't possibly do a worse job running the Pub than the university did.



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