

Election analysis by Gordon Turtle

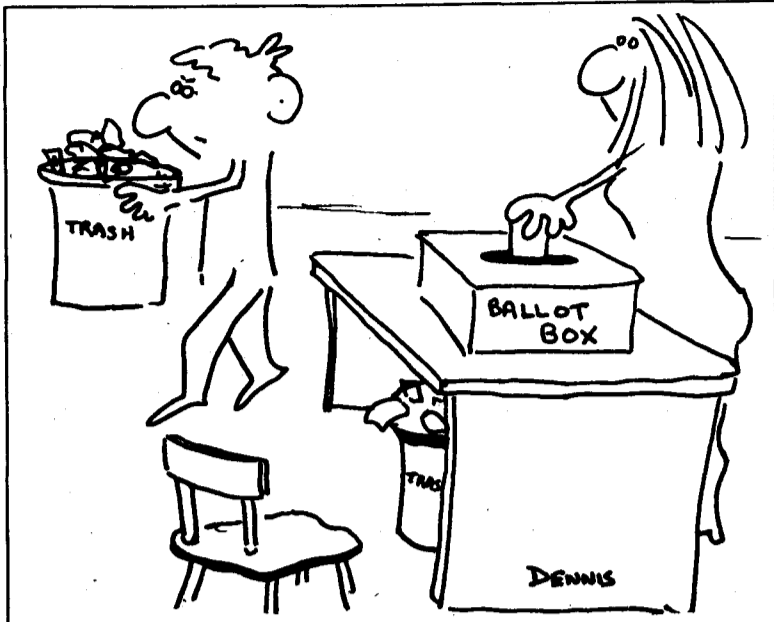
Students' Union elections, as all students are aware, are becoming increasingly boring, repetitive, and ridiculous as the years go by. There is virtually no student concern for the organization, and little is being done to provoke interest. The last five years or so have seen elections contested mainly by candidates with little or no policy, with political platforms of any substance being provided by "outsider" contestants, such as the Young Socialists, various independents, and other unsuccessful parties. Front-running candidates construct a miniature political machine that promotes false personalities and meticulously avoids positions and substantial political stands.

Usually, each year is a bit worse than the last, and this year's election scenery is, true to form, somewhat less interesting than last year's, when the Olmstead slate was swept in on a wave of apathy.

Before examining this year's contestants' platforms, the nature of slate-building should be discussed. Election hopefuls usually try to construct a slate that represents as broad a cross-section of campus groups as possible, which is legitimate and understandable. But this predictable tactic has become a U of A cliché, as it's now considered imperative that a commerce student run for vp finance, a residence student be found to attract the res group, a fraternity member of associate be rounded up, and so on. The capabilities of a person are secondary to the votes he or she can bring in.

So in the frantic days before the close of nominations, organizers run around trying to find the always-reluctant candidates. People are urged, persuaded, coaxed and cajoled into running, often at the last minute. Significantly, few candidates on this kind of slate decide to run on their own because they have concerns that are important or grievances with the way things operate. They run because their arms are twisted, and magically, a "team" emerges.

Of course, it would be political suicide for a slate to admit that it is composed of three or four last-minute choices, as that would cast a dark shadow on their team spirit image. But, last week when interviewing presidential candidate Nolan Astley, I



asked him why he was running. His answer: "because I was asked to run."

However, as the campaign develops, I'm sure Astley will be chastised for his "wrong" answers by his faceless campaign organizers, and, by the end of the week, his answer to that question will be something like, "I'm concerned about the direction the Students' Union is taking, and I think my experience will enable me to act capably in office."

Ah, yes, the experience factor! A look at the Astley slate's election pamphlet reveals that for them, experience is what is important. Two of the pamphlet's four pages are taken up with a listing of each candidate's administrative experiences. Let's take a closer look at the relevance of this experience.

As news director of CJSR, Astley has interviewed Pete Lougheed, Horsman, Notley and various U of A officials. How scintillating, Nolan, but what does that have to do with being a good president? Are we to assume that having conversed with these important people that you will have a better chance of negotiating with them as president? Nolan also notes that he is an advisor to a local Lutheran Youth Group. Admirable, but hardly significant to the campaign.

Kris Farkas and Jan Byer, two of the Astley slate candidates both possess a lot of relevant experience, so why did they pad their mini-bios with such garbage as "committee member for the promotion of the Agriculture Faculty to Southern Alberta High

Schools" (Byer) and "Member of Arusha Cross-Cultural Center" (Farkas)?

Karen Stephanson tells voters that she is involved in the Chaplaincy Organization and is a coordinator of Knox-Met United Church Youth Group as well as a member of the Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship. Big deal. This may be an appeal to Christian voters, but the tactic is cheap and its effect minimal. Anyone who relates this experience to capability for the SU executive has never spent an hour in or near the executive offices.

One scant page of the Astley pamphlet is devoted to policy and it successfully matches the innocuous irrelevance of the pamphlet's inside pages. Platitudes abound as Astley and his mates promise everything except a cure to all known diseases. They appeal to students' cupidity, (not a totally unwise tactic), and outline such pie-in-the-sky plans such as "leadership in the fight against inadequate funding", "improve communications between the Students' Union executive and the student body", and a "Push for awards for high academic achievement". I let the reader draw his or her own conclusions: the pamphlet is sufficient comment.

But if Astley's platform is virtually ridiculous, then the Scott Thorkelson Slate's policy is outright insulting. I'm sure that the brains of the slate must have been watching a *Happy Days* rerun when they wrote the pamphlet, and it's truly disappointing to see statements like

Continued on page 7




PORTRAITS OF DISTINCTION

Care Enough ... to get the Finest

1012 HUB 433-8244

SPECIAL STUDENT PRICES



Freshman Writing Skills Workshops

The Students' Union will sponsor the Freshmen Writing Skills Workshops again this year in TL-11 on the following dates:

February 12 How to discover what you really want to say — the crucial first step

February 13 How to fashion a good argument

February 14 How to structure effective paragraphs

February 19 How to convince your reader that you know what you are writing about

February 20 How to build the overall structure: essays and reports

February 21 How to proofread — that important last step.

For more information, contact Chanchal Bhattacharya, Vice-President (Academic), 259 Students' Union Building, phone 432-4236.

Your Students Union — Fighting For Literacy!



The GANDELIER card & gift

Have you ever seen our best selection of Valentine cards? They are so cute.

We have some specials on Valentines too:

 1) Sterling Silver Charms **30% OFF**

 2) Canadian hand made Wool Jacket **20% OFF**

 3) Strass Crystals **10% OFF**

 4) Museum Posters Reg. 9.99 **Special 6.99**

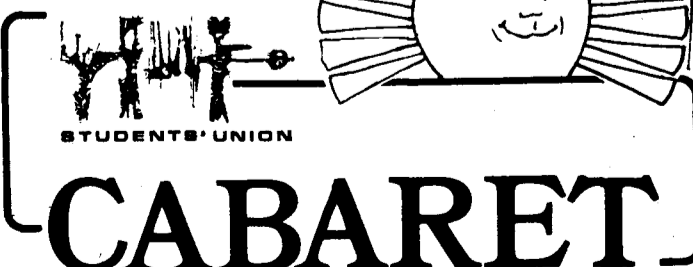
 9005-112 St. (HUB Mall) ph. 433-7615

SATURDAY NIGHT IN DINWOODIE

8 P.M.-MIDNIGHT

Rex Bartlett Band

 Eastern Canada's Best Rock — Country Rock



Advance Tickets in HUB (\$3.00)