

**EDITORIAL**

# The right to choose

Censorship in its many forms seems to be the sign of the 80's - everyone is getting into the act. The provincial government has a censorship review board for films, the feminists are lobbying for censorship of pornography and material portraying violence against women, the moral majority is trying to ban any media depictions of life in any of its more grimy ruses, and our own student's council has, with questionable effect, tried to clean up its own back yard by ending the sale of *Playboy*, *Playgirl* and *Penthouse* in SUB as well as boycotting goods or services tainted by the South African connection.

While most parties participating in the act of censorship seem to have good intentions, this trend toward banning or censoring material has frightening implications. The right to freedom of speech is a very important one. It implies a freedom of opinion and freedom to make choices based on enlightened introspection. When the decision is made for the individual, the opportunity to think about the choices made for them seems also to cease to exist.

One definition of a censor, found in the Penguin English Dictionary, is an "official authorized to ban publications, plays, films, etc. which contain material of an immoral or seditious nature."

The problem with carrying out the duties of the offices described by this definition is one of defining immorality or seditiousness. The dictionary can again come to the rescue, but essentially it comes down to the fact that a decision of the few limits the choice of many in the matter of state security, policies, and what crosses the boundaries of good taste.

The inequities are obvious and many. Zeitgeist, a German word, describes it well. It means, loosely, a sign or trend of the times. Censorship reflects the mores of the times.

An extreme example of censorship is *Solidarity* opposing its government's restrictions, another is the many countries practicing the restriction of the press. Minor or extreme, however, having the freedom to make a personal decision concerning any issue seems vital to maintaining any pretense of a greater freedom.

Closer to home, the Students' Union has been thwarted in its attempts to ban the sale of Carling O'Keefe products in SUB by an Alberta Liquor Control Board ruling that states that each of the major Canadian brewing companies be represented when selling any liquor products. Instead Council has been forced into a compromise of stating their political reasons for boycotting these products allowing an informed public to make an informed choice.

This, in its essence, is the basis for a free society. The ability to state an opinion, any opinion, should be given free reign and equal opportunity. It shouldn't mean that the opinions of the few should regualte the habits of the masses or vice-versa.

Censorship and the issues facing censorship have generated a lot of heat. Everyone seems to have an opinion on every facet of the argument. That is what makes the controversy so difficult to resolve.

The feminists (and many others) would like to see the sale of material depicting violence against women stopped. However, if an adult (male or female) is willing to take a certain amount of money for a certain pose, and a magazine is willing to print it and others still are willing or eager to buy it, perhaps censorship is too strong an action to begin the opposition to this act. Raising the consciousness of the people involved so that they understand the objections to their actions seems a more likely place to start.

If Apartheid is so horrible because it limits the freedom of movement and opportunities of people, how much better is it to limit the thinking or choices of millions more in what may seem like innocuous anti-pornography legislation or not-so-innocuous anti-abortion legislation. The disclaimer by the Surgeon General on a package of cigarettes that smoking may lead to cancer is more in order, it leaves individual choice in the matter of ruining one's health.

The key issue in censorship is that of having the right to obtain information about anything. It also means exercising that choice wisely and practicing active resistance. If you have a strong opinion, air it in acceptable ways. Denying someone else's freedom of choice resolves nothing.

Censorship, rather than being either-or, can be a compromise. Disclaimers or legislation to take certain materials out of the mainstream and behind counters, or made accessible to only those of a certain age can be as effective as eliminating choice. In short, legislation should not take the place of personal responsibility for one's actions.

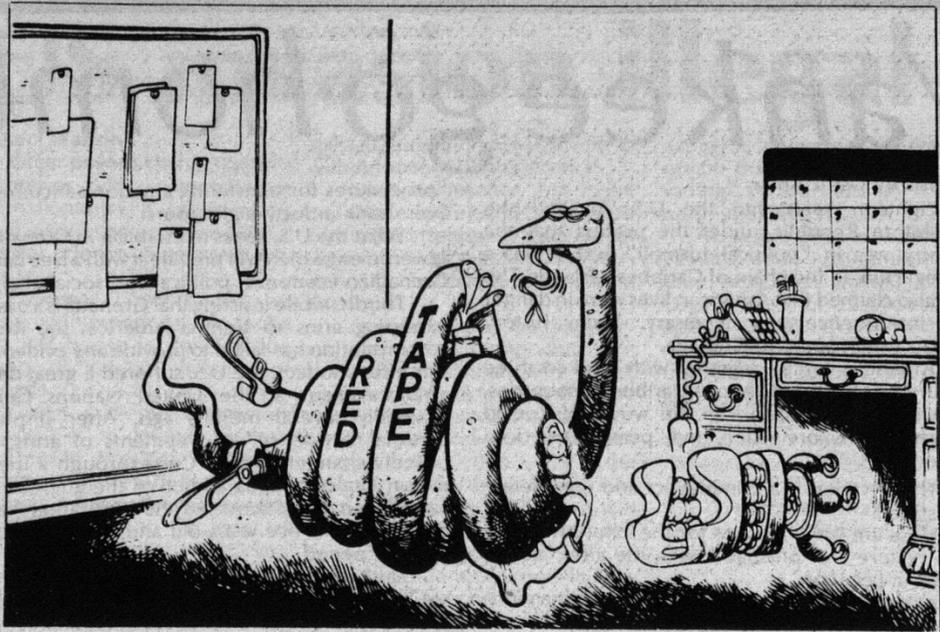
Janine McDade

**Editor-in-Chief** - Brent Jang  
**News Editors** - Mark Roppel, Ken Lenz  
**Managing Editor** - Gilbert Bouchard  
**Arts Editor** - Greg Harris  
**Sports Editor** - Kent Blinston  
**Photo Editors** - Bill Inglee, Angela Wheelock  
**CUP Editor** - Jens Andersen  
**Production** - Janine McDade  
**Advertising** - Tom Wright  
**Media Supervisor** - Margriet Tilroe-West  
**Circulation** - Tom Wilson

It was a dark and stormy night for the Gilbertologists. Frank Bevacqua and Rob Johnstone, recent converts, slipped back to a more primitive state of mind and prayed to a tree. Patrice Struyk, Terry Lindberg, and David R. Marples stayed at home and carved zuchinnis into jack-o-lanterns. Wendy Hawkins, Bonnie Zimmerman, and Dwayne Chomyn tried to carve a jill-o-lantern out of K. Arthur while Brenda Waddle looked on and cackled. Bernard Poitras and Lois Daves dressed as the Ghosts of Deadlines past which scared the shit out of Oscar Ammar and Neal Watson. Tom Huh (who ain't scared of nuthin) and Jordan Peterson (who never alters the copy) passed out drugs laced with candy to Ludwig and Ninnette and Gunnar who are old enough to make the wrong decisions about Chemical Abuse. And the other intricacies of Gilbertology.

The Gateway is the newspaper of University of Alberta students. Contents are the responsibility of the Editor-in-Chief. All opinions are signed by the writer and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Gateway. News copy deadlines are 12 noon Mondays and Wednesdays. Newsroom: Rm 282 (ph. 432-5168). Advertising: Rm 256D (ph 432-4241). Students' Union Building, U of A, Edmonton, Alberta T6G 2G7. Readership is 25,000. The Gateway is a member of Canadian University Press.

**gateway**  
 Nov. 1, Volume 74, no. 15



## « LETTERS TO THE EDITOR »

### They're getting younger everyday

I have just read the Ernest Braithwaite III saga! The man (I think that's what he is!) has lived his life in a cocoon or was possibly hatched in recent months. Until he has lived in the real world with real people, and has talked to real people, he should consider staying in his dollhouse and just keep on playing with G.I. Joe & Barbie dolls.

Arnold Yeoman  
 "the Western Peasant"

P.S. I, Arnold Yeoman, have just repeated in English what I should have said in my last letter to your publication. Seeing I'm only 12 years old, and have some grammar problems, I write with all due apologies to the Queen's English.

Sincerely Yours  
 Arnold Yeoman

*Footnote: My son's first letter got by me but I still applaud his initiative. Could be trouble ahead though if he gets too fond of his pseudonym!*

Joanne Alzner  
 Arts

### My, what language!

I am now obliged to respond to Kathleen Moore's reaction to my letter of Oct. 18.

Kathleen, I do not understand why you want me to evaluate the Nazis' wanting to have as many German babies born as possible. In my letter I stated only that there is a similarity between the philosophies of the anti-lifers and Nazis: the elimination of anyone who interferes with their goals (German dominance or absence of pregnancy). This philosophy is, to me, the same philosophy behind the symbol of the swastika.

In your next paragraph, Kathleen, you begin to make less sense. "Pro-life" means simply that - the respect of all human life from conception until natural death. I will grant you that my term "anti-life" is not a perfect one, but it is certainly more applicable than "pro-choice"; such a person displays more commendation for she who chooses to kill her baby than she who decides to respect the unborn person. Perhaps the term "pro-abortionist" is best.

I had to laugh, Kathleen, when you proposed alternative "logical tags" for those for and against abortion. Not only do neither have anything directly to do with the issue of abortion but the word "controllist" does not exist. Logical, indeed. Mr. Spock is probably turning over in his grave.

After this, Kathleen, you asked me of what am I so afraid. Wake up, you idiot, wake up! The day society decides any one life is expendable, we put ourselves in danger of similar fates. Already, many people believe euthanasia is not immoral. Were you not taught that killing is wrong? Apparently not.

Next, you were crass enough to claim that I "forced" my opinions on you. Careful with the words, numbskull. I was merely expressing my opinion; when someone (i.e. you, Kathleen) says I cannot exercise my rights as guaranteed in the constitution, she has no business exercising her own. Stupidity, thy name is Kathleen Moore.

Kathleen's and Andrea Kohl's letters regarding

my Oct. 18 letter made no mention whatsoever of unborn children. The main point of my letter was that the unborn child is a person. I believe both women tried to avoid the real issue in order to attack my less relevant comments. Therefore, I will no longer respond to pro-abortion letters unless they deal specifically with unborn children.

Warren Opheim  
 Arts II

*P.S. Kathleen, contraceptives do not "eliminate" the chances of pregnancy; they only reduce the chances. It seems to me that you think you know more than you actually do.*

### Abortion: legalities

The debate on abortion has increasingly relied on name calling and illogical rhetoric. The argument of each side has been lost. I'd like to clarify the debate with a restatement and examination of the main premises of both pro-life and pro-choice.

Pro-life argues that fetuses are persons, and abortion kills fetuses, therefore, abortion is murder. Before the validity of this argument can be accepted the first premise must be examined.

Joseph Borowski is currently trying to gain constitutional support for the premise that a fetus is a person and is therefore ensured to the right to life, liberty and security of person by the Canadian Charter of Rights. His case was dismissed when the Saskatchewan Court of Queen's Bench ruled that there is no existing basis in law to support the claim that a fetus is a legal person. There is no legal or constitutional support for the position that a fetus is a person.

There is no theological evidence for this premise either. The Bible provides no description of a fetus as a person nor does it provide a specific injunction against abortion. Even God, didn't provide support for the pro-life position.

The first premise of the main argument made by pro-lifers is easily disputed. Fetuses cannot be proven to be persons. And until this is proven the entire pro-life argument is invalid.

The pro-choice argument states that women have the right to make choices regarding their fertility and their bodies, fetuses are dependent on women's fertility and bodies, therefore, the choice between childbirth and abortion is each woman's right. Women and, if applicable, their supportive partners, who choose abortion are not murderers.

Like all rights, the right to choose must be based on a thorough understanding of the alternatives and implications. If reproductive education and birth control services were more accessible and effective so many abortions would not be the alternative to an unwanted pregnancy.

One of the principles of Campus Pro-Choice states "Let us promote a social order composed of responsible, informed individuals who can act upon their choices with dignity." Let us continue this debate in a rational and dignified manner.

Denise Burrell

*P.S. Frankly, Mr. Opheim, a woman who chooses to have an abortion usually does so after a lot of soul searching and pain. To unjustly accuse one of making a "feeble excuse" to "slaughter" is more than I can stand. Why don't you take some positive action towards providing education about sex, the results there of and the alternatives for the prevention of unwanted pregnancies.*