

Referendum "ballot" seen as an insult

The Executive Committee of the Committee of Department Chairmen (an *ex-officio* group with University funds at its disposal) has provided the faculty with a "ballot" for a referendum to reorganize the governing structure of this university. Without wishing to go into the details of their proposal here, it can only be summed up as an insult to the intelligence of their peers — for keep in mind, we are their peers.

Despite all the immediate, local problems that face universities today (financing, social relevance, student apathy/activism, the role of universities in a changing society, etc.) the fundamental *academic issue* is and has always been that of scholarly excellence vs. educational mediocrity. These other issues obviously and quite directly effect the basic one of obtaining and maintaining levels of excellence in teaching and research. Certainly no amount of prestige can save a university if there isn't money there to fund it.

The public (and here I include the students) may be distracted from the importance of this central issue, or they may even be unaware of it, especially when so-called public spokesmen level their attacks on universities for not doing their job, however "job" may be defined, e.g. too few students, a waste of public funds, too radical, too ivory towerish, *ad infinitum*.

As every staff member knows, the scholarly worth of a university is ultimately measured by the quality of research and teaching exhibited by the majority of its academic staff. This ranges from the number of Nobel Prize winners to the younger scholars who are at the leading edge of intellectual developments in their respective fields.

The U of A is not the best university in Canada, though it

may be of some consolation to know that we are certainly not among the worst. There are in fact many individuals and even some departments that are recognized both within and without Canada.

One feature of a university that lends itself to providing the right kind of atmosphere which will increase excellence and at the same time reduce the level of mediocrity can be found in the administration and operation of the university. Presidents, vice-presidents, deans and chairmen can have a pronounced influence towards encouraging academic excellence or, unfortunately, mediocrity.

The very best universities will select people for administrative posts on the basis of their scholarly abilities. This involves people who are both able teachers and researchers (it is silly to try and separate these) and who also have some talent for working with people. This involves such qualities as honesty, openness and a willingness to listen to and discuss issues with colleagues.

The fatal flaw of an academic administrator (no matter how good a scholar he may be) is to see himself as a separate, more wise and specially privileged individual than his colleagues. Unfortunately universities encourage this separation and give the suggestion of superiority by the special privileges and prerequisites which so often go with administrative appointments.

(One need only wander around a university campus and note the facilities that are provided chairmen, deans, vice-presidents and presidents and even some of the higher non-academic administrative positions. Compare these, then, with the facilities and services provided the fulltime academic staff.)

All of this can tempt even the ideal scholar-administrator to forget the fact that he occupies a position (usually only on a temporary basis) because he was selected from (or pushed by) his peers. One may be tempted to forget that talents in administrative position and power had nothing to do with the qualifications (usually a Ph.D.) that got them accepted into the scholarly world.

Now, all of this is bad enough, or potentially so, when the administrator is a recognized national or international scholar. A greater danger exists both for individuals and the credibility of the university as a whole, when

administrative positions are filled by people of mediocre academic talents.

When this happens the administrative positions become not means to scholarly ends but, rather, ends in themselves. And there is no surer way to subvert the goal of academic excellence than to fill administrative positions with people of mediocre ability.

It is with this in mind that I would ask the academic staff of this university to evaluate the proposal made by the Committee of Department Chairmen. You should consider whether or not you would wish to invest administrative positions with the

additional powers that they had, even were it the case that they had the best of all possible scholar-administrators.

My own experience as chairman for the Department of Anthropology (1971-75) presses me that only in a limited number of administrative positions do we have people who represent the best standards of their profession. Whereas it does not mean to simply downgrade the contributions in administration that faculty members have made to the university, it is far too many it is the contribution that they will make.

Dr. H.T. Lewis
Associate Professor
Dept. of Anthropology

Prof. pro-proposal

Re: Gateway editorial of Nov. 23, 1976.

I disagree with your editorial of Nov. 23 about the "Proposal" of the Chairmen's Committee. I should like to make a few comments about authority, responsibility, accountability and student representation.

The comparisons with the Middle Ages and with dictatorships are wrong, because neither operated on the principle of accountability. However, accountability is increased in the "Proposal."

At present decision making powers are vested in committees and councils and the responsibility for the implications of their decisions then has to be carried by senior administrators. Our University does not have a clear distinction between legislature and executive, because many items on the agenda of Faculty Councils and of GFC deal with purely administrative matters, not with legislation and policy-making.

Although most of the members of GFC are elected, they do not represent any particular constituency and are not obliged to seek information, nor do they report back to anyone. A department chairman cannot represent his department and the views of his colleagues and students on GFC, since he is not a member of our highest legislative body.

The "Proposal" tries to make the authority given to the appropriately selected academic administrative officers of the University commensurate with the responsibility they are charged with, and increases their accountability to those faculty members for whom they are responsible.

You write: "We'd have to find hundreds of students who would devote enough to learn about the political structure of the University and then devote many hours working within that structure." This is very true. It demonstrates that student representation would be increased at the departmental level, where programmes and courses are developed. That devotion you describe ought to be expected of any person who wishes to participate in the university administration.

Gerwin Marahrens, Ph.D.
Chairman
Dept. of Germanic Languages

Ed. Note: But I then add, Dr. Marahrens, that even if we do find those hundreds of students, they will only represent the student point of view at a low-level advisory level in contrast with the present extensive student representation on General Faculties Council — a body with considerably more power than a departmental committee would have. I was arguing about extent of *power*, and not merely the extent of involvement.

Ross replies to Cook's correction

I would like to thank Margaret Cook for writing in Gateway, Nov. 25, and clearing up the matter of how she financed her education. It was also very interesting to hear that she supported her child while at the U of A.

Miss Cook asked where I come from.
The answer: Athens.
Colin Ross
Commerce 2

Poster prejudice perhaps political

The University Baha'i Club wishes to address itself to the topic of prejudice evident on campus. Recently, the Baha'i Club, in publicizing the Celebration of the Birth of Baha'ullah, Founder of the Baha'i Faith, placed posters in most of the buildings on campus inviting people to attend.

These posters were, in many cases, torn down or otherwise mutilated within periods ranging from one hour in SUB to one day in BioSci. We have been subjected to this problem with alarming frequency over the past three years while other posters, some of them outdated, remain unscathed.

We cannot understand why this type of prejudice exists in an enlightened academic community. Other forms of prejudice against other groups, be they racial, religious or political, evidenced by the graffiti around campus are no less serious. In a world where prejudices are the cause of so much suffering through personal sorrow and war, it would seem that we could well do to discard this former behavior in favor of a more enlightened attitude that would achieve unity in diversity.

The Baha'i Club holds a basic "... that prejudices, whether religious, racial, patriotic or political are destructive to the foundations of human development," and that "Until they are dispelled the advancement of the world of humanity is not possible..." (from the Baha'i writings).

We would like to support the idea that campus groups be allowed to publicize and participate without fear of reprisal, news events to inform the University community at large of their activities. In this way, the individual rights of free expression and free choice could be exercised.

University Baha'i Club
Board of Directors
Paul B...
Lynne John...
David...
Shaku...
Vijay...
Pat Slob...
Pam Ste...
Andrea...
Wendy...

The Gateway

Four Gateway editors are leaving the campus at the Christmas break and they're not coming back to the paper. We need help — people to work as news, photo, arts, and features editors. The pay is nominal — \$200 a month — and the hours are long, but it's a good way to gain some journalism experience. If interested, apply (in writing with clippings or short resume) to Room 282, SUB (include name, address and phone number).

NEW BLOOD

WANTED

Take him as long to find someone to do the job as it would take to do the job himself.

Grude says the Special Events office will be restructured when Elves leaves it to include many of the changes Doug has discussed in his letter of resignation.

Doug and Harry Goldberg (General manager) and Ted (SU finance manager) are to sit down before he leaves and discuss many of the proposals he's presented.

is leaving us because he's over-extended himself. The result of the office has been partly because of administrative shortcomings. He freely admitted "but not because of my own shortcomings."

ed out very well. I wish his degree to school. I wish the last in his Education.

Elves would don't know I'm quite correct solely on grounds of photographic joke about prostitution is sexist, i.e. reveals a form of discrimination on gender.

Zoeteman announced to Students' Council Monday that he will ask the Board of Governors Frida Corbett Ha parking lot. Zoeteman information Council Nov. the B of G's decision as the reason for his action.

Honorable mentions in this category include Taxi Driver Obsession, and La Tete Normande. St. Orige. Special acting awards go to Bob Macorrit of the Saskatchewan Roughriders, for his dramatic performance in the Western Final this year, and to Joe Clark, for his brilliant impression of a political leader. Clark has been so good at his act, I almost believed a friend of mine when he told me Clark was a leader of that other federal party.

To conclude this semester's wanderings, the final installment of the Great Trivia Contest. While not being actually overwhelming with responses, there is a tight race in the making here, as we approach the home stretch. (Horse-racing fans, take note.) Oh yeah, Merry Christmas, etc.

Who was the Edmonton Eskimo center in 1968? (Focled all you y types, eh?) That was the T. It's one of those things that you can't put up posters for special events because the party won't be over yet.

I went to... and I... the w... that s... quality... oppose... had. "I... want to ac... Dlaf's wife... and ours will... ind of talk... ight.

Another th... as the... seem to think... much... trying to find out... didn't see any... creepy, overweight... who always put his... coffee cup at the re... Dlaf told him about w... he couldn't wait to co...

forums, cabarets, and special readings) on campus. The ob includes arranging preliminary bookings, advance publicity and administration of the "special events."

In future we'll try and bring special events more in line with what the title implies," says J. Creech, Sociologist.

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