

# Editorial



Letters to the Editor should not be more than 250 words in length. They must include your signature, faculty, year of program, I.D. number, and phone number. Requests for anonymity are at the discretion of the Managing Editor, but the above information is required regardless. We reserve the right to edit for libel and length. Letters do not necessarily reflect the views of the Gateway.

## Strapped for cash

Over the weekend a Tory Party Conference voted in favour of mandatory seat-belt legislation which may also force the Tory caucus to vote on the issue. Let's hope so.

The argument that wearing seat belts is a restriction of one's personal freedom is not a valid argument. You are required to wear a seat belt in an airplane for safety reasons. Is that not also a restriction of your personal freedom? What about having to stop at a stop sign. Is that not also a restriction?

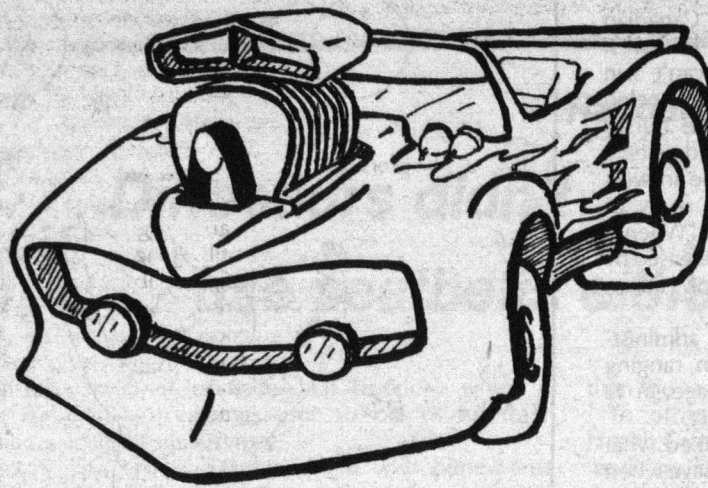
The issue is a lot like the smoking issue. You're allowed to light up so long as your smoking does not bother others. Well, it should be the same for seatbelts.

Besides the personal injury suffered by non-seatbelt users in car accidents, a lot of taxpayers' money has to be used for their health care costs.

If saving a few lives, not to mention some money, means mandatory legislation, I'm all for it.

Besides, I don't see how this restriction of freedom is that restrictive. You're not doing much in a car anyway except sitting. What are you gonna do, play handball?

Dean Bennett



... MILEAGE?  
I DON'T KNOW  
... NEVER HAD  
THE NERVE TO  
START IT !!

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## Letters



### Labour pains

To the Editor:

I would like to express my dismay over the Student Council's failure to urge Housing and Food Services to stop buying food from Gainers. I understand that the decision was taken because there is no apparent health hazard. This may be so, but there is a serious moral issue to be considered here. Let me elaborate:

1. Gainers is an old Edmonton plant. Many of its employees are in their mid-years and have given their life's work to the company.

2. A couple of years ago, after buying the plant, Peter Pocklington persuaded the union to accept a reduction of wages until he could afford to pay more.

3. Last spring, when the old contract expired, the company was doing well economically and was able to expand in Canada and the United States. It never claimed that it could not pay more.

4. Before the end of the contract, workers were compelled to work overtime on an almost daily basis, even on holidays important to them and their families.

5. Rather than prepare for fair negotiations, the company — before there was ever talk of a strike — advertised for strike-breakers and unilaterally terminated the employees' pension plan.

6. Gainers embarked on a policy of employing workers for less than ninety days, dismissing them before they were eligible for any benefits, and rehiring them again for a short term.

7. Twenty-five hours after the strike began, Gainers announced (later retracted) that the strike-breakers would permanently replace the striking workers, and that it would not negotiate with the union.

8. Actions mentioned in 5, 6, and 7 led to highly publicized acts of violence on the picket line.

9. The courts immediately granted injunctions crippling the union's legal strike efforts, and Edmonton Police, at great cost to the city, used its riot squad to protect Pocklington's property.

10. During such negotiations as have taken place since June 1, Gainers has refused to guarantee the jobs of the striking workers and is now rejecting out of hand a union offer of starting wages of \$1.19 below Canada's other meat-packing plants. The Labour Board has found Gainers guilty on three counts of bargaining in bad faith. It also ruled that the company was the first to illegally terminate a pension plan since these were legally protected in Alberta (1950).

This is a sad story that is not coming from South Africa, Chile or the Soviet Union, but from Edmonton. There was a time when students might have been proud to be arrested on the picket line. While times and methods change, moral issues do not. University of Alberta students, through their Student Council, should at least demand that when purchasing meals from Housing and Food Services they could be certain they were not eating Gainers food and so assisting an employer bent on destroying a union which legally represents his employees.

Harvey Krahn  
Dept. of Sociology  
University of Alberta

### Rod's wrong?

To the Editor:

In response to the editorial by Rod Campbell in the November 6 edition of the Gateway, I would like to take this opportunity to correct some of Mr. Campbell's inaccuracies.

Firstly, Mr. Campbell's quoting of the Housing and Transport Commissioner is totally out of context. The actual statement, "I feel we would be taking a stand when it is not our position to be correctly doing so..." is in reference to the fact that, as an institution, the Students' Union should not "take sides" in this highly controversial issue. Or, in other words, unless we can ascertain beyond any doubt that Gainers' meats are in fact substandard in quality, we cannot discriminate against this company.

Secondly, although Students' Council cannot and has not condemned Gainers for its labour practices, individual students can if they choose. In fact, I urge all students to make up their own minds and choose for themselves whether or not to support any side in this issue. That is how students in the U.S. took a stand for black civil rights; not by having their Students' Council pass motions that were unfairly biased, poorly worded, and not necessarily the views of the students on this campus.

Andrew Fredericks

### Grumpy gripe #1

To the Editor:

In regard to Grumpy's comments (Nov. 6), I have also laboured in a union lumber mill — what did I get for my union dues? A pension plan, dental plan, the confidence of working in a safe mill, and most of all, job security.

Yes, I agree there are unions (post office, breweries) that strike for no bloody reason other than to appease the lust for power by union leaders, but it should be government legislation that prevents unfair strikes, not the abolishment of unions. The pros of unions will always outweigh the cons, and if we can get rid of these stupid labour laws in Alberta, the negotiations between unions and companies will be much more fair and productive.

It makes me sad that there are people like you, Grumpy, that would put workers into oppression and despair just because you can't get a beer when you want it — now that makes me ill.

Joe Martha  
Science IV

### Road to power?

To the Editor:

Re: Opinion by Rod Campbell

While I certainly agree that the lack of political guts on S.U. Council is deplorable, I'd like to point out a few things.

Let's not glorify the "stand" students took in days past over U.S. civil rights. In the first place, "the times they were a changing", and there was a certain amount of hopping onto the social consciousness bandwagon. American blacks were going to try to change things anyway. Student support was helpful, but not a requisite. It's possible that student participation muted the effectiveness of the civil rights movement.

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Secondly, it's obvious that the civil rights of blacks haven't been improved all that much — a visit to any large American city will show that. There may be legislated equality, but certainly not social equality. Blacks are still a disproportionate percentage of the poor and disadvantaged in the U.S. There's still a lot of work to be done.

My concern over Council's lack of political vision is extreme. But some things need to be understood. Students are attending university for pragmatic reasons these days. It's not a matter of "go to school or go to war" as it was in the 60's. People want a secure future. I'm not sure if a university degree guarantees anything beyond student loan debts, but the alternative is worse. I've been there.

The problem is that student unions have become too institutionalized. There is no vision of student input on university decisions because the dream has become reality. We have input. The S.U. at this university operates a 5 million dollar a year operation; peanuts by any real business standard, but S.U. members seem overawed by it all. When students had nothing, it was easy to risk it all...

Student leadership is not going to come from the ranks of an institutionalized bureaucratic hierarchy. Legitimate student participation in social issues is always led by those willing to challenge authority and break the rules. S.U. makes rules; they're unlikely to advocate breaking them.

There is hope; hope that maybe the S.U. will wake up and realize that they can make a difference in the "system". Hope that S.U. stops squandering a unique opportunity to lead. However, until Council realizes that money is not the only form of power and works to become politically sophisticated, this is a dim hope indeed.

Martin Levenson  
Arts II

### Gone courtin'

To the Editor:

In his article on the SUB Courtyard Enclosure ("Plans for Dome Are Continuing", Nov. 4, page 3), John Watson says the proposal will "leave the fireplace in the middle of a newly widened corridor. The committee felt it would be inappropriate to move the fireplace as it was a gift to the Students' Union."

I pointed out to Mr. Watson that this was not how the committee felt. The committee felt that it would be inappropriate to remove the fireplace because the fraternities had donated it to us, however, we saw no problem with moving it, and my final report states this quite clearly. I referred Mr. Watson back to the final report, which he received on Oct. 29, and was reassured that a correction would be printed.

Unfortunately, the correction left me equally dissatisfied. The correction reads, in part, "Actually the plan calls for the fireplace to be moved. We don't know where."

The Courtyard Enclosure Committee's final report clearly states "If it is feasible to do so, the fireplace will be moved to the largely unused corner of the courtyard, in between its present location and the meditation room."

The news editors have been doing a commendable job this year, but who's editing the editors' stories? If Mr. Watson didn't know where the fireplace was to be moved, he should have found out. He could have re-read the report or asked me for a clarification.

K. Graham Bowers  
Chairman  
Courtyard Enclosure Committee

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## The Gateway

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