

Between the ballot and the bedroom

Oh yeah, that's it. Give it to me baby. Common. Hurry. Hurry hard. Hard. Hard. Hard. Hurrayyyy...

Porn? Curling? Or a candidate looking for votes? I love it when a great coincidence erupts like so many teenage wet-dreams. This week marked Valentine's Day — that annual Hallmark-moment when guys forget to doubt its significance, and girls mourn getting dick-all from all-dick, even when they know

better than to expect much else. It also marks the return of student union elections — another annual event like a festering cold-sore that burns the lip of society, oozing with puss, etc. etc. Much like love-day (or gag-day for the more evolved single-types), students forget to doubt the significance of elections, and candidates mourn getting dick-all from voters, even though they don't expect much else.

Both events? Pointless. We

need a day to waste paper on cards like we need a month to waste paper on posters. Yeah, real necessary. But you have to wonder why we keep coming back for more — more love, more elections, more crap.

Valentine's Day: you walk around wishing "happy..." to all like it has meaning or value. If you need a corporately-dictated day to express your affection, then there are no real affections (except maybe in a platonic or animal-human-plant

way).

Similarly, when you walk around telling people to vote, no one cares. I'm less likely to vote than a beaver. Same for most when it comes to student elections. If you need a 60s-style constitutionally-imposed set of elections, just to provide a whipping-post for university administration, then there is neither a union nor democracy.

And that's link — union. "I join you, Mr. Prez, with you students, in socialist matrimony." Student elections are supposed to unite students in one common goal — protection from individualism and separation. Academics is an isolating activity — it's lonely. Some remain The Academic-Bachelor, stuck in a book, for the duration of their years. Why not try to fix them up at the dating service of student politics? "Pick up the phone, we're all alone." Why not inspire fraternity, etc. in your fellow students and make them care, not about politics, but about each other. Touching really.

Well I say "don't touch me in my special place." The campus bar has a more unionizing effect than elections and it's not the place, it's

the booze. Again, like Valentine's Day, you can make anyone or anything look good after the right dose of tequila. Sure, you'll go home together and have a passionate, drunken union, but the next morning, all that's left is two singles, some empty bottles, and a bizarre green smell emanating from the bathroom. Sure, people and elections look good now, but wait for the hang-over.

But, most don't participate in democratic intoxication. They let well enough alone, do their work (unlike those running for office) and lack the hangover. There is no hangover, no consequences. It's like a new year's bash where you go through one tough night and forget it till the next year. Ya get all fancy-like, screw around, and expect it to all work out.

Yeah. Drunken fantasies rarely work so nice outside the sheets. Put down your cards, your box-of-chocolates-of-life, your *Gazette* editorials. Don't confuse union and love, invalid and valid, card holiday and reality. Don't mix water and wine, education and politics.

Don't drink and drive.
Don't love and vote.

Tristan Stewart-Robertson

Choking to death on cigarette smoke

EDMONTON (CUP) — So how about I light up a bunch of toxic waste and then blow it around in the room? Would you like that? I hope most people would have the good sense to leave the room, and that someone would kick me in the head for endangering other peoples lives.

But that's not what happens.

No, we non-smokers sit politely and remain courteous while someone lights up a cigarette. As one who is not often prone to telling others what to do or how to live, I find myself simply sitting back in my chair and trying hard not to cough.

That would be impolite.

The other side of this etiquette demands that smokers, for instance, delay lighting up around the dinner table until all have finished eating. I am told that some people are bothered by other people's smoking while they eat. This makes sense enough to me. I would even consider it courtesy were it not for the fact that I happen to be bothered by smoke whether I'm eating or not.

What difference does it make if a smoker is slowly killing me while I'm eating or while I'm sipping my coffee afterwards? This bullshit etiquette exists so smokers can feel less guilty about the harms that they are inflicting on others.

If there was any substance to this etiquette, then people would smoke outside. Even being in the same building as a smoker is harmful to an extent, if the air is re-cir-

culated, to say nothing of walking past smoking areas and being subjected to the stench.

People have argued that smoking causes harm to smokers' lungs and hearts, and that smoking causes harm to other people through second-hand smoke. Now this is no news flash. But try this on for size: smoking is retarded. Yes, that is a news flash. It must be since so many people don't see the problem with it.

I guess you've got to see how the other half lives before you know what's really going on. So picture this: I'm sitting, voluntarily, in a smallish room with a whole load of smokers puffing away like Rene Levesque. At the time I am annoyed by the difficulty I'm having with breathing.

But the real joy comes the next day when I crawl out of bed feeling like I have ash in my sinuses. Coughing, I stagger my way into the bathroom for a shower and find that the smell of burnt tobacco is following me around. The shit is in my skin. It'll take a few days before I feel clean again.

Having never been a smoker I can only imagine that one must get used to that kind of feeling. But what happens when you need to run to catch a bus? What happens when you kiss someone?

If people start smoking because it's cool, then lung cancer and heart disease are cool by inevitable extension. If people keep smoking

because it's addictive, they must love the way it slowly weakens their body. If people smoke to relieve stress, then stress is ok. I don't understand any of this.

But if people want to do this to themselves, let them. I'm not going to tell them to stop. But I do demand that they stop doing it to me.

Don Iveson



"Gettin' those warm furrries."

photo by Allison Capstick

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