

Forum

Culture is first casualty of cuts

Since a letter in the January 2 issue of the Gateway questioned the existence and support of Faculte St. Jean (whether it was serious or glib is still open to debate), the response from the Faculte students has been surprising, to say the least. Last Wednesday they held a rally to brainstorm an effective reaction to the letter, and individual letters from outraged Faculte students number in the double figures.

What is really noteworthy is the quickness and the vehemence of the response to one line in one letter. Most of the staff members at the paper simply dismissed the line out of hand as too ludicrous to comment on. The fact the Faculte responded in such a quick, unified, and organized way says a lot for their spirit. However, the letter and the response it received once again raises the issue of what priority we give our culture here in Canada.

There is no question that financing culture is an expensive proposition. Some may liken it to funding a financial sinkhole. The cash returns are primarily intangible. But the value of institutions like Faculte St. Jean is not something you can put a dollar sign on. How can you put a market value on Canadian heritage?

When times are hard institutions with little apparent financial return come under unfair scrutiny. When the Mulroney government first took power in 1984, one of the first agencies to shoulder the burden of cutbacks was the arts community. For example, federal funding to Canadian orchestras was reduced by a whopping fifteen per cent. As a result three major orchestras nearly went down the tubes, Edmonton's being one of them. And while Edmonton is slowly recuperating, their future is by no means secure.

Is it any wonder that attitudes like this gather momentum when the impetus for them comes from Ottawa?

Juanita Spears
Dean Bennett

The Gateway

The Gateway is the newspaper of the 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.

Editor-in-Chief: Dean Bennett
Managing Editor: Sherri Ritchie
News Editors: John Watson, Greg Halinda
Entertainment Editor: Elaine Ostry
Sports Editor: Mark Spector
Production Editor: Juanita Spears
Photo Editor: Ron Checora
Media Supervisor: Margriet Tilroe-West
Advertising: Tom Wright
Circulation: George Onwumere

Staff this issue: Dragos Ruiu, Jerome Ryckborst, K. Graham Bowers, Lloyd DeVincenzi, Rod Campbell, Randal Smathers, Brad Johnson, Alex Shetsen, Glenn St-Germain, Alan Small, Jeff Cowley, Tim Enger, Eric Baich, Marc Simao, Pat Stansfield, Brian Munroe, Hor Tak Zung, Ruth Anderson, Ken Dons, Randy McCoy, Nolan Berg, Eric Janse, Lawyers.



Animals revolt on Letterman

Letters...

Still more Faculte furor

To the Editor:

In response to Arthur Bobke's recent letter "Faculte for sale," I would like to respond on behalf of his fellow students at the Faculte St. Jean.

Firstly, the Faculte is not for sale and if it were, its proceeds would not go to the aid of educating students like Bobke, but for his information, the Faculte is the oldest college for French in Alberta. It is for everybody in Alberta whose goal is towards bilingualism for both French and English students who want to learn. Maybe Bobke is not interested in learning as evidenced by his lack of knowledge in education issues, but students at the faculty are, and they appreciate the government efforts towards providing an appropriate atmosphere to do so. It is ironic that he has studied for two years, but has not acquired the ability to read the U of A calendar, which includes information about the Faculte and the courses it offers.

God forbid he expand his horizons and actually go out of his way to meet a Faculte student or come to the campus where he could see that it's not ghosts who roam the halls, but living and breathing students like himself. At the risk of having him threaten another service for bilingual students, there is a free shuttle bus between campuses he could take to come and see that we are actually kindred spirits in our fight against all cutbacks in any sort of higher learning.

Abdou Bennani

To the Editor:

RE: Arthur R. Bobke's letter - Faculte for sale.

For your information the Faculte St. Jean is the only institution in Western Canada that offers degrees in French. They are the Bachelors of Arts, Science and Education, and the students that follow these programs take the majority of their classes in French. This faculty has made the University of Alberta notable, and has attracted students from all over Canada. If the Faculte was sold as Mr. Bobke suggested, the U of A would become again just like any other university.

Leslie Anne McKeague
Madeleine Leuke
Fannes Radcliffe
Eveline Sasseville
Alma Sasseville

To the Editor:

RE: Faculte for sale?

On behalf of many insulted students, I would like to express my outrage stemming from this article which suggests the University seek funds by selling the Faculte St. Jean. I am confident that these comments and suggestions solely reflect the ignorance of the writer responsible and not the

general consensus.

Mr. Bobke's first point expresses his outlook on the value of education. He feels we get "no value for the money we spend here." My question, in response, is what is he doing here? A person with this kind of attitude towards university education cannot be justified in making such absurd suggestions.

To answer his question of what we do at the Faculte St. Jean, I would like to enlighten him. The Faculte St. Jean offers students the invaluable opportunity to pursue their university courses in French. Allow me to remind everyone that one-half of Canada's population is composed of French speaking citizens and that Canada has two official languages.

To defend his suggestion he writes, "I'm sure no one would miss it." As a matter of fact, 450 registered students would dearly miss it. If Arthur Bobke has not yet met a student from the Faculte, it's because of his narrow-minded views of education and his ignorance of the prominent existence of the Faculte.

Sylvain Crocq

Accept some responsibility!

To the Editor:

RE: "This Ashtray is a Smoke-Free Zone," Jan. 29

In any public debate on an emotional issue such as smoking, the word "freedom" is almost always presented. What is very rarely introduced to the fray is the phrase "public responsibility." If a person wishes to live in a society with any degree of freedom, that person must also accept a certain amount of responsibility toward the well-being of fellow citizens. Freedom without responsibility will lead to the collapse of that society.

The long-term effects of second-hand smoke are well documented. The short-term effects are equally annoying. Many non-smokers find it difficult to enjoy an evening out when they come home with bloodshot eyes, congested sinuses, and clothes that want to walk away by themselves. This does not seem to bother many smokers.

When a society has a socialized health care system, smokers place an additional burden on their fellow citizens. Every taxpayer suffers financially by subsidizing the smoker's use of the medicare system. The smoker creates further suffering among family and friends if he/she dies after a smoking-related illness. It is thus a fallacy to assume, as Mr. Shetsen has done, that only the smokers themselves suffer from their habit. It is about time that smokers stopped espousing "freedom" and instead started considering the broader societal implications of their actions.

Glenn Arnold

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. We reserve the right to edit for libel and length. Letters do not necessarily reflect the view of The Gateway.