

A problem with vending machines

The Editor,

Some time ago I noticed that the microwave oven in the basement of the Tory Building had been removed. On enquiry, I was told that it had been burned out by a student placing a metal object in it, and that Hudson Bay, the contractor receiving all the profits on the vending machines etc. would not be replacing it, because 'we have three machines, and we can't shell out \$1,500 every session to replace them'.

This is a prime example of the disadvantage of giving out a monopoly service franchise to a commercial concern; profit and not the need of the student public, is the measure of whether services are given or withheld. All those students who through this winter will have to live and work ten or twelve hours a day in some cases about the Tory Building will not be able to have hot food.

There is another iniquitous aspect to the situation; more than twenty years have elapsed since the invention of the electronic mine detector, which can detect metallic objects within its field.

Surely by now, such an accessory could be installed in these ovens, sensitive enough to detect any metal object large enough to damage the machine. Why then has this not been done? Do the manufacturers prefer to have a regular proportion returned for repair or replaced every year?

I suggest we act now to persuade Hudson Bay to carry through their original commitment to the students of U of A. If they decline, I suggest a boycott of the vending machines, with replacement supplies substituted from the Students' Union; and a picket line outside Hudson Bay downtown; while serious consideration should be given to terminating the contract. Students' Union could own the machines—it must be profitable, or the Bay wouldn't want the franchise—and the supplies could come from the kitchens here at SUB. If ovens with built in safeguards can't be bought, then surely it is not beyond the engineers here on campus to devise protective devices for them.

John S. Williams
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The "mixed" up machine

The Editor,

To the sometime student of probability, a successive sample from a random population should indicate the randomness of its entirety. However, on the night in question, as I was indulging in my Saturday evening coffee break, an irrepensible urge to gamble overcame me. My hand was inexorably drawn toward the "mixed bars" category of the SUB chocolate bar machine. I was rewarded for my efforts (and dime) by a package of oatmeal cookies (Cap'n Crunch). With the gambling spirit coursing through my veins, I submitted twice more to the vagaries of the heartless metal monster. And my reward? Oatmeal cookies (Cap'n Crunch). Unaware of the Monte Carlo fallacy, the appearance of something other than oatmeal cookies (Cap'n Crunch) seemed almost a certainty. Therefore, I inserted another dime. A hush fell on the crowd

as they awaited the machine's offering—oatmeal cookies (Cap'n Crunch again).

Clutching four packages of oatmeal cookies (Cap'n Crunch), I turned to the onlookers for sympathy, assistance, or money. My plight was received lightly, save for one solitary individual who had a staunch belief in the concept of justice, as defined by the university. Not quite believing the spectacle he had just witnessed, he proceeded to attempt a disproof of my more than audible shouts of prejudice. In went the dime; out came the oatmeal cookies (Cap'n Crunch).

If the events of this evening are not enough to convince you of the inhumanity prevalent in a modern university, then I suggest that you try the mixed bar machine in the basement of SUB. I suggest you pack a lunch.

Dudley Patterson
Home Ecch! 3

If it needs improving, tell them how

The Editor,

Ever since the Lister complex was built I am sure the residents have been complaining about what is now simply called Lister food. Complaints have ranged from how bad the hamburgers are, to the checking system and to the lack of variety of menus. What most of these individuals don't seem to realize is that Lister has the best cafeteria service and selection of all the campuses across Canada. The proof of this is the plaque hanging in the cafeteria directly over the belt supplying trays. Listerites should be proud of the award!

Every day the residents receive excellent, well balanced meals whether they admit it or not. At home they don't on the average eat meat twice a day and have all the salads, vegetables and deserts they can handle. Only an infant would walk out of the cafeteria with half a dozen apples and have them found a few days later in a waste paper basket. This is in fact what Listerites have been caught doing. This is just one illustration of what foods and housing must contend with.

The staff is fighting a losing battle. No matter how hard they try, the students will gripe about the meals and the service they get.

The card checking system is under especially violent criticism. Stop and think of how much food about 20-25 people a night might eat. This is the average number that drops in for a meal with the aid of a friend. I for one don't want someone getting for free what I have to pay approximately \$100 a month for. If this money about \$60 goes into the food services provided. I wonder how many know that they can be expelled out of residence for lending their meal cards.

With all of these problems and complaints what surprises me is that of the 1,800 living in residence no one has come up with a better system. Mr. Bone of foods and housing is more than willing to listen to suggestions. Miss Gibbard the dietician in charge, is also very willing to listen to menu suggestions. It doesn't help to say that something is bad. Please tell them how to improve it!

To further give the students what they want, a Foods Committee has been organized. They are hoping to receive all the complaints and suggestions and effect any desired changes where it is at all possible. So Listerites speak up! You'll be listened to.

Gisela Sorge
House Ec 2

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A quaint reminder—because an article appears on the left portion of page four doesn't necessarily mean it is an editorial. An editorial never receives a byline. But when a bylined column appears in that space, it means someone has something we consider relevant and we grant him the space to express his view rather than subjecting readers to our view continuously.

In future, we will label all editorials in black type so you won't become confused with editorial policy and individual opinion.

Miss Pilkington accepts Glenn Sinclair's challenge—we print her answer and his challenge verbatim. Other letters concern vending machines and the SDU. Peter Boothroyd has a few words for exam writers (which means all of us).

Letters and articles should be brought to room 282 SUB or mailed to The Editor, The Gateway, Students' Union Building etc. Keep them less than 300 words.

We reserve the right to edit all letters for legal or other reasons. Pseudonyms will not be published. Give us your name or nothing at all.

We also welcome contributions from cartoonists.

—The Editor

The absurdity of exams

By PETER BOOTHROYD

This is the time of the quarterly pagan rituals at the university. Human sacrifices are offered to the Gods of success anxiety and depersonalized efficiency. Students all cram for mid-term tests. First year students especially worry about their first exams in the university, only to find the tests as silly as they were in high school. Careers are affected, (in some cases determined), by teachers who form their opinion of students on the basis of performances on these first tests.

During the time of the rituals, students castigate themselves for being stupid. Professors castigate them for being stupid too. "How could anyone not understand such brilliantly presented lectures?" The anxiety abates for a while, then develops full-fledged again as the deadlines for term papers and the next set of examinations approach. The fine distinctions made by counsellors notwithstanding, students judge themselves according to their success at beating the examination game. A person feels stupid if he does badly, feels brilliant if he outwits the teachers—even if he knows that it's absurd.

Yet the student accepts it all, barely being able to articulate to himself the causes of his frustration. He gets drunk or watches a lot of television after it's over, then gradually builds up anxiety again as the next set of examinations approaches. After all, that's the way it is, so there must be some value to it. Sure.

Sinclair's challenge

Dear Miss Pilkington,

Due to the number of crises that I believe are facing the students at this university this year and because of the seeming lack of concern on the part of the students' union to openly confront these crises I wish now to make official the challenge I issued last Wednesday after the Little Hyde Park debate: I am willing to meet you at your earliest convenience in public debate here on campus.

You indicated last spring that you were intent on improving the communication among students on this campus as well as encouraging more individual student initiative. I would suggest that until now this has been in evidence on very rare occasions and I believe this must be changed. In fact, I believe that the Students' Un-

ion should show the good faith that has been placed in it and advertise this debate throughout the campus so all students, who may feel as I do, may be aware that a change to "find out what IS really going on, is going to be afforded to them.

As I understand you will be out of town in the early part of November and as I will be away for a couple of days in late October I would suggest Wednesday, Nov. 13 as the date. I would further suggest that the 'debating society' and the forums committee be mandated to set up and promote this event.

I am quite confident you and your council have been doing much since taking office and this will be made evident in the debate but I believe we have the right to hear all about it.

SINC

Pilkington's acceptance

Dean Glenn,

I am delighted to accept your invitation to debate with you in public since I've always thought our lively exchanges deserved an audience!

I am particularly interested in examining the issues of the Students' Union with you because you have made some public allegations in the past two weeks which have little basis in fact.

In your official letter announcing your "challenge to debate", you accused the Students' Council of a "seeming lack of concern . . . to confront these crises" and alleged that the council has done little to improve communication and encourage individual student initiative.

In reply I must point out that it is still early in the year and the council's emphasis thus far has been on (a) developing channels of communication and (b) research into university issues.

Specifically, in the area of communication alone, we have made progress with the following projects:

- expansion of student representation within all levels of university government;
- opening of General Faculty Council meetings to students;
- establishment of a polling bureau to obtain representative student opinion on specific issues;
- development of a rotating speakers' circuit enabling executive members to speak to all campus groups;
- a study by the Reorganization Committee of ways to improve communication channels among students; and
- campus-wide student-faculty administration seminars to im-

prove communication among all sectors of the university.

Granted, not all these programs have been fully implemented, but our approach is a total approach. We are attempting to define problem areas, examine possible alternatives, and develop coordinated policies and programs within the context of long-range goals.

It is now November, and we are moving into the "action phase" of this process.

You and I are both impatient for results. Your own direct involvement as a member of the Students' Union executive for the past two years has enabled you, I'm sure, to see the problems which we confront. I might point out, Glenn, that these problems did not suddenly develop—they existed when you were in office too.

On Wednesday, November 13th, I shall be glad to lay our policies on the line and debate our approach against your approach and the actions you took to alleviate these problems when you were in office.

I'm sure the debate will bring forth our points of contention; however, in my view, the purpose of the debate is not to display our personal differences, but rather to generate awareness of the policies of the student government and to examine the weaknesses which exist in an effort to make the students' union more responsive to the needs of students. I am looking forward to hearing your opinions and, perhaps more important, the opinions of the audience-participants.

Marilyn Pilkington
President
Students' Union

Ignorant, apathetic and happy

The Editor,

"Please, SDU, tell us where you are." pleaded three rehabilitation medicine students in a recent issue of The Gateway, asking, in effect, for a repeat performance of last year's SDU rallies outside SUB theatre.

On the contrary, I'm extremely grateful to SDU for confining their immature circus antics to less accessible quarters. This enables many students who are completely uninterested in student

power to enjoy the facilities of the Students' Union Building without SDU's loud, annoying presence.

I believe SDU is now sufficiently established on this campus to assume that those students sincerely asking the kind of enlightenment which SDU offers, can personally contract one of the SDU's notorious leaders. Please spare the rest of us, who profess to be ignorant, apathetic and happy.

Beverly Dobson
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