



## editorial

### "90% natives illiterate" - TOEFL

There are all kinds of new tunes being whistled by Student Counselling Services and the Admissions Requirements Committee regarding who is proficient enough with the English language to be allowed into university.

Professor Hough's tune, of Student Counselling, is somewhat soured due to his having to eat crow: It was discovered that misleading information was given *The Gateway* saying "no, Canadian students are not required to take the TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) exams, of which only one out of ten will pass."

Indeed they are, says the Admissions Requirements Committee, and memories were suitably jogged.

"Any person in Canada who has studied English only as a second language, and where the language of instruction in their own educational system is not English will have to prove their proficiency with English," says Doug Burns of the Admissions Committee.

Thus only one out of ten native Indians, Eskimos, or French-speaking Quebecois, regardless of their speaking or writing skills, will be allowed into university. This is the same with any foreigner, because only the 90th percentile ever scores the necessary 600 on the TOEFL exams.

A while back some people thought this was a form of prejudicial discrimination and took their complaint to the Human Rights Commission. The Commission felt the claims were justified and carried out an investigation aimed at reconciliation of the situation.

Verbal support for protesting against this ruling has also come from high-ranking officials in the provincial department of advanced education and manpower.

The result? The wording in the university calendar will be changed to make it sound less prejudicial. Thanks from the Human Rights Commission and the system will continue to keep Canadians out of the U of A.

Now it's fairly well known that the quality of the spoken and written word at the university has been 'stumbling over its tongue' for quite some time now. Reports have come into this office that term papers have been handed in to professors unparagraphed, unpunctuated, misspelled, and plagiarised (unwittingly or otherwise) from assumed high school graduates.

Burns told *The Gateway* a survey of high school students' English skills shows almost complete illiteracy on the part of Albertans today in *English speaking high schools from which evolve U of A students*. So why pick on students who probably have had a better background in grammar and spelling than almost anyone else?

I don't buy the line that the TOEFL is nonprejudicial - nor do I believe it is simply aimed at saving room for those who have the ability to learn in English because that simply isn't being done.

Just count the number of verbal numbskulls who somehow managed to graduate high school and I think you'll see my point.

by Greg Neiman

#### What do you read?

On the back page of this issue we have presented a questionnaire that we hope will help us understand more what our readers want from the paper. Please fill it out and bring it to room 282 SUB, or drop it into campus mail, same address. If you want to reply more fully, please feel free to attach a piece of paper to the questionnaire when you return it. Thank you in advance for your consideration.

We don't like to brag BUT one of our staffers is about to be published by another respectable outfit. So if you happen to pick up the February issue of *GRAIN* (one of Canada's better efforts in literary magazines) look for Lindsay Brown's by-line beside some poetic musings.



## letters

### Expensive education

I am tired. I am tired of the argument of ultra-conservative colleagues and associates who hit me with the line that education is a privilege not a right or on the other side of the fence, that education is a right not a privilege. I am unimpressed with a provincial government who indiscriminately applies anit-inflationary reasoning and lowers the boom on university budgets. I am disheartened by a university who sees increased tuition as the only way of balancing the books. To argue that students in general should pay more of the cost of educating themselves - perhaps as high as 25% of the cost is certainly questionable.

Let me inform your readers of the current estimated replacement costs of education a doctoral student - \$50-\$100 K. Would the university suggest that we raise their tuition fees from \$1200 to \$5,000 - \$30,000 over three years? No. Why not? Because it is obvious that very few members of the possible Ph.D. candidates would pay this sum. They are already sustaining a loss in foregone income as well as putting forth the effort required to obtain such a nebulous distinction. Perhaps I've made my point. In the event that you have not yet grasped my meaning I will be more explicit.

A doctorate degree extends credibility to a member of society which enables him to maximize his output to that society. A society which wants

the most out of its members will logically strive to put all its members in positions where they can achieve maximum output. This applies down the chain as well to M.A.'s, B.Sc.'s, etc. For this province to increase the cost of education by any amount (\$150 this year) when it is very short of highly qualified manpower strikes me as illogical and potentially very detrimental to the fabric of the society it is attempting to build.

In the event that my point of view fails to arouse sympathy may I suggest that the university and provincial government take steps to assist the student in securing summer employment. For example, often governments have been known to offer tax incentives to industry if they hired students. This can be a twofold benefit:

- a) students obtain jobs.
- b) industry becomes acquainted with the varied talents that students can offer.

Beth Atkinson  
Member of the  
GSA Executive

### Fight anit-inflation

Last September, the Alberta government announced an 11% ceiling on increases in operating grants to municipalities, hospitals, school boards, and post secondary institutions. Many students who heard of this 11% ceiling probably did not quickly realize its full implications. What, then, does this provincial "measure against inflation" mean to the student?

Firstly, one must realize that in the light of inflation rates that well exceed 11% for post secondary institutions in Alberta, this 11% ceiling on increases actually means *cutbacks* of from 5% to 9% in real terms. Then, one must face the fact that universities and colleges get between 70 and 90% of their operating funds from provincial grants. These provincial ceilings then mean large cutbacks in actual operating costs for universities and colleges.

This means, among other things, less money for staff salaries and research, leading to a worsening of the student/instructor ratio, and a loss of better teachers as they leave for institutions that are better able to provide them with higher pay and better facilities for research.

Less money for operating

the universities also means tuition increases. A 25% increase in tuition will be recommended to the Board of Governors by the Finance Committee of the University of Alberta this Friday. So this 25% is not just talk. Tuition increases coupled with less financial aid for students who need it will result in a much harder situation for all except those with rich parents who can absorb the financial burden.

It is difficult for a lower income person to obtain funding for school. Since most of the aid for students comes in the form of low-interest loans, a lower income person accustomed to a struggle for necessities is intimidated by the huge sums of money needed for college or university.

Reducing the inadequate aid available will result in many talented lower income people entirely giving up the idea of a post secondary education. The final result will be an education in Alberta of lower quality and narrower availability.

But, one is tempted to say, with the present academic glut on the market is it not desirable to have fewer academics? This is a very dangerous train of thought. Firstly, even if it were desirable (and it most certainly is not) to reduce the number of academics, why not restrict them to the ones with the most talent, and not to the ones with the most money? The argument that the rich are the most talented is so stupid and bigoted that it is not worthwhile to waste time with. Secondly, the idea that we have too many academics is ridiculous. The fact is, there are too few jobs for them. If Alberta and Canada are to remain dynamic and strong we must increase jobs, not decrease academics.

The government must realize that academics are necessary for our technology and way of life. They must realize that education is necessary for the future of Alberta, and that education is a right to be enjoyed by all, and not a privilege of the wealthy.

What can we do? The Federation of Alberta Students (FAS) has started a province wide campaign where concerned students write letters to the Premier expressing their dissatisfaction with the Government's cutbacks in education. Let us all take part in this worthwhile campaign. Send your letters to: The Honourable Peter Lougheed.

Walter G. Aiello

### Love your SUB guard

This whole business about the security guard and the stolen beer soon managed to take on the outward appearances of a trial. Was a gun involved? Was it a flashlight? Were the students lying or hallucinating?

The security guard in question came into the offices following a series of letters of condemnation to prove that his neck indeed was not red. He is the man in the picture with the hockey team he outfitted at his own expense.

He's not rotund, as the first "spark" letter indicates, which adds credence to the hallucination theory. Its kind of hard to think a nice guy like that would pull a flashlight on anybody, much less a long haired beer thief.

Ed.

