

## CHOPPING BLOCK

by Jens Andersen



*And the seasons  
they go round and round  
And the painted ponies  
go up and down  
We're captive  
on a carousel of time*  
Joni Mitchell

Another year whirls to an end with dismaying speed. How the hell did it pass so quickly?

As usual the shortage of time (not to mention space) leaves me with dozens of things left unsaid. Ah, the woes of a critic whose mouth runneth over!

I never got around to commenting, for instance, about what a horrible comic strip *Bloom County* is. Nothing but cheap sarcasm and dumb-it-up situations - just like *Wizard of Id* or *B.C.* And to think some people consider it equal to the subtle and brilliant *Doonesbury*.

*Bloom County's* influence on the photo cutlines in the *Gateway* this year is also deplorable.

Or what about the routine hysteria during SU elections this year? They ended, as most democratic elections do, with vicious personal attacks by people who could not possibly know the candidates. Indeed, I suppose this is the central farce of democracy: that voters are constantly asked to choose between candidates they know nothing about.

Hence the pathetic politicians who are constantly inflicted on democratic countries. The best that can be said about these statesmen is that they accurately represent the general numskullery of the populace.

But this will change, you say, when people's consciousness has been raised? Balderdash. People, being what they are, will always vote for the most idiotic candidates and doctrines, i.e. the ones that promise the most. It is a firmly established law of nature.

Then there is G. Gordon Liddy (see the story this issue, or the short piece on him in the April *Saturday Night*) spewing his super-patriotic bilge - and at the same time quoting Nietzsche. What irony! Nietzsche was, of course, shrewdly anti-nationalistic: a self-described "good European" who never hesitated to take brutal whacks at his country, or even western culture in general.

As with Hitler reading Nietzsche, or with some university students absorbing their education, Liddy clearly demonstrates the futility of throwing pearls before swine.

And then there is Killam Prize-winning Dr. Werner Israel (see last Thursday's *Gateway*) and his theory that the universe began as a speck with inflationary tendencies. This "inflationary cosmology" (to use Israel's words) "gives an exact picture of how the universe was created."

Now I don't want to sound picky, especially since I am a mere undergrad, and I am all too aware of the possibility of a *Gateway* misquote, but... well... where did this little speck come from, anyway? Hmm?

I would prefer an answer consistent with the law of entropy.

And going further down the list of criticizable items I missed, there is Firesign Theatre's recent record *Shakespeare's Lost Comedie* (great stuff from humorists who take the decline of western civilization as their subject matter); Michael O'Donoghue in the January *Mother Jones* (ditto, although I dispute his claim that *National Lampoon* has gone downhill or sold out); the pointless name change of the *Gateway* "Arts" section to "Entertainment" (a stinkweed by any other name... hey! Just kidding, Greg. Get that exacto knife away from my throat); underground cartoonist Robert William's recent book of "lowbrow" art, which contrary to its name is magnificent, displaying also his multitudinous talents as an oil painter; and... but I could go on forever, and I see the Managing Editor at stage-left brandishing his shepherd's crook.

Let me just finish by saying that this Chopping Block, number 84 in the series, will be the last one published weekly, and perhaps forever (that's right kiddies, a qualified farewell, just like the ones the rock stars make). The column may appear occasionally next year, but don't hold your breath.

In the meantime, it's been a long haul but a lot of fun.

*Now our befuddled Managing Editor tells me I have to stretch the column. Okay: here is a poem which should have gone into the Literary Issue, but was suppressed by the communists here in the office:*

15-Second Radio Spot

For The Fascist Alternative

*(With apologies to John Lennon)*

*Working-class hero is nothing to be  
Five in ten Artsies are just that, you see  
And what they've done for the working class  
Is bitch a lot and smoke some grass  
So don't be one of these so-called heroes  
Be openly zilch with us honest zeros*

## Roger Caron II

Story and Interview  
by Gilbert Bouchard

*This is the second half of a Gateway interview with Roger Caron. Caron, author of the Governor-General Award winning novel Go-Boy, lectured at the U of A in SUB Theatre last Tuesday.*

*We spoke to Caron in his hotel suite before his lecture on his 24 years in Canadian prisons and his adaptations to the outside world.*

Roger's hyperactivity also plagued him in prison where he spent "long periods of time in the hole (solitary confinement) on bread and water, and got the strap on numerous occasions, and was experimented with on three different occasions."

Altogether Roger spent 10 years in the hole, once for a two year stretch.

One of the experiments inflicted on Roger was a mind-altering drug, a form of "anger gas".

"The idea was that the gas would use up all the person's anger so that you'd have no anger left. Well, on the last of the six trials I totally freaked out, and had this out of the body experience. I was floating over my body, and I saw it below me, thrashing about in a straight jacket."

That last bout with "anger gas" left Roger, then just 17 years old, with amnesia.

Roger doesn't know for sure, but thinks that the CIA was behind the "anger gas" tests. Roger's publishers spent six months tracing the gas, to no avail.

Another time, after Roger witnessed three suicides within three days, he sank into such a deep shock that he stopped talking for 23 months.

"The third guy that committed suicide jumped out of his cell and landed right in front of me. I had pieces of this guy all over me, in my pockets, in my hair, everywhere."

Trying to get Roger to talk again the prison doctors went as far as to use the shock treatment.

"Shock treatment is like kicking tires on a car, you don't know what it does, but it makes you feel better."

When asked what reforms he would make to our prison system, Roger is a bit hesitant. "One thing I never took the liberty to do was to use my book as a platform. That would be a bit of a luxury, a bit of an ego trip. All I did was to tell a story, and let people make up their minds. Even while working for the Solicitor General's office I don't take that liberty."

"If I were to make any changes to the prison system, I would spend less money on James Bond gadgets for the guards. If the guards could carry cannons, they would. Let's face it. A gun has to be only so powerful to stop an inmate from climbing over the walls."

"Prisons are so big now that caseworkers never get to talk to the prisoners enough. I would build smaller prisons, with no more than 50-75 inmates."

"I would put all the hardline guards outside the fences, and inside the prison would be the

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