

# EDITORIAL

## Kill ugly monomania

News and editorial writing analyze society almost exclusively in political terms. Despite complaints that the Gateway is too apolitical we still treat such diverse subjects as club space allocation and university funding the same way the Washington Post treats American arms policy or the upcoming presidential primaries: as power struggles between conflicting interests. Yet, even if politics is the arbiter of human life, newspapers and newspaper readers discredit themselves by ignoring other ways of understanding.

An exception is economics which is starting to occupy a regular place in our newspapers and magazines. But economics is a cold sterile field that gives us a rudimentary view of how people behave and says nothing about how people should behave.

At best economics can help us execute political decisions; we still need to study other fields to make those decisions wisely.

The fields of sociology, psychology, and biology occur occasionally in newspapers. History and anthropology are scarcely heard from. Philosophy is rarest of all. We spend scant moments of our lives learning about what people do, what they did before or why they did any of it. We spend almost no time learning about what they should do.

Still, we take these ill-conceived thoughts and apply them to politics. Politics are the way we try to improve society; it is the highest cause that most of us will advocate. The vast majority of people, however, are trying to change the world without having learned anything about it.

Short-sighted understanding leads to the squinted ideological analysis that characterizes the opinions commonly expressed in newspapers. People react and rail against ideas or accept them according to the simplified theories of intellectual charlatans.

Furthermore, the work of genuine thinkers is often cheapened by those who follow, like a many faceted peg that is passed from hand to hand until it is smooth and round. Of course it still fits in the hole but it now rattles and rolls loose.

To keep the integrity of old ideas and to create worthy successors we need to keep learning about ourselves. Newspapers claim that their purpose is not to educate. People can go read books.

True enough (although most people do not go to the library because they don't know where to start) but it indicates the low priority newspapers place on deeper thought. Newspapers in our time do a lot more than present the events of the day. They entertain us, teach us to cook, help us find goods and services; they have become a grab bag of every day life. That education holds such a small place in our newspapers and our lives is to our discredit. It beggars the concern for politics that overwhelms it.

## Note

At a press conference Monday, Universiade president Ed Zemerou said the U of A Board of Governors would "badger" the federal government for extra funding for the University Games. I find that hard to believe. Certainly whenever the B of G have asked the provincial government for more money they have acted like a smaller, more timid animal.

Kent Blinston

## The miracle of democracy

Democracy substitutes election by the incompetent many for appointment by the corrupt few.

George Bernard Shaw

## A murky business

Philosophy: A filter turned upside down, where what goes in clear comes out cloudy.

H.L. Mencken

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### Staff this Issue

I think that I shall never see/A Gateway lovely as a tree/A tree, or two, or three or four/Well pulped and crushed/On the dry end floor/Do not discard this Gateway dear/Recycle it, and for that tree/Worry not, just shed a tear...

Local versifiers Gilbert Bouchard and John Algard have once again lost all sense of rhyme; Margo Schmitt wrote the sports page; Ann Grever and Ken Lenz went stage-hopping; John Roggeveen is serious; Gerard Kennedy is on time; Steve Samuel dropped in; Adam Wessel and Jack Vermece met a princess; John Sorenson and Nate LaRoie band together with Martin Beales and Bill Ingles in our version of Superflash; Heather-Ann Laird examines Annie's theories of sexual behaviour; Sarah Hickson described a life...

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**MANAGED PELICAN**

THE TIME HAS COME TO SHOW WHAT I CAN DO

WELL, THIS IS IT.

13 WEEKS OF HARD WORK AND NOW I'M GOING TO PRODUCE.

QUESTION 1. Starting from elements give a synthesis for

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(2 marks)

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## « LETTERS TO THE EDITOR »

### Nicaragua update

by John Sorenson

Last week's invasion of Nicaragua by CIA-backed Honduran troops represents an intensification of a U.S. campaign to destabilize Nicaragua's Sandinista government. The destabilization program has long been admitted to be a major aim of the Reagan Administration which has implemented an extensive CIA spy network throughout Central America to this end. To date the destabilization campaign has operated on the levels of propaganda, sabotage, and economic pressure but the U.S. now seems committed to escalating its offensive through a proxy war carried out by Honduran troops.

Nicaragua has consistently sought to avoid such hostilities. After the 1979 revolution which overthrew the U.S.-supported Somoza dictatorship, the Sandinistas attempted to maintain diplomatic relations with the U.S. Citing a threat of Soviet influence, the U.S. has rejected negotiations. Reagan's proof of Soviet activity in the area has been met with scepticism from Congress and the press, in scenes reminiscent of an unsuccessful propaganda campaign in March 1982 which was designed to demonstrate the flow of Soviet arms from Nicaragua to El Salvador. The "star witness" in the Reagan Administration's case, Orlando Jose Tardencillas Espinosa, a Nicaraguan captured in El Salvador, discredited U.S. claims of Nicaraguan assistance to the revolution by revealing that he had been tortured and told what to say by the U.S. Embassy. Even *Newsweek* magazine, hardly a Communist propaganda organ, disputed Washington's claims.

Intensified military activity directed at Nicaragua follows a prolonged propaganda effort by the U.S. to discredit the Sandinistas. A major issue has been the relocation of 8500 Miskito Indians. While the press has taken little interest in atrocities directed at Indian populations in areas such as Guatemala, Brazil and Paraguay, where active genocidal programs exist, allegations of human rights violations by the Sandinistas were given wide exposure. However, the Sandinistas maintain that the Miskito were removed from their homes in north-eastern Nicaragua to protect them from attacks by Honduran counter-revolutionaries. The Miskito were also the targets of a Honduran propaganda campaign designed to exploit regional and ethnic divisions and to convince the Miskito that the Sandinistas planned to murder them. Another reason for the relocation was the activities of Steadman Fagoth Muller, a Miskito leader who is allied with the Honduran forces.

While the press was quick to report on the "brutalities" involved in the relocation there has been far less coverage of the fact that the Sandinistas are building houses, schools, and health facilities for the Miskito and are attempting to make the Miskito Advisory Councils, now 50 per cent Miskito, totally indigenous. Furthermore, advocates for Native peoples' rights, such as the International Indian Treaty Council, the American Indian Movement, and the World Council of Churches have visited the relocation camps and found them much improved. All of the agencies supported the Sandinista relocation decision. OXFAM is currently working on further improvements.

Another issue in the propaganda campaign against Nicaragua has been censorship of the press, despite the fact that political and press freedoms are probably greater than at any other time in Nicaragua's history. *La Prensa*, the newspaper most frequently censored, is the voice of large capital and the articles censored are those designed to stir anti-Sandinista agitation. For example, religious "miracles" are cited to prove supernatural displeasure with government policy. Claudio Duran (*Canadian Forum*, Aug./82) has compared the activities of *La Prensa* with those of *El Mercurio*, a right-wing newspaper in Chile, which in the early

1970s associated the Allende government with criminal violence and natural disasters in order to create a climate of psychological anxiety and promote anti-socialist feeling. *La Prensa* is also closely associated with COSEP, a political party formed by the former upper classes and the owners of non-nationalized sectors of the economy. The Sandinistas seek the co-operation of these sectors and allow COSEP to participate in government even though COSEP has consistently used *La Prensa* to promote anti-Sandinista propaganda.

Economic pressure from the U.S. is another factor in Reagan's destabilization program. The major cause of Nicaragua's current economic crisis is the \$1.6 billion foreign debt left by the Somoza government. Additional strains have been caused by the flight of private capital in the hands of the bourgeoisie who feared a loss of their personal power. In actions similar to those taken before the CIA engineered the overthrow of Allende in Chile in 1973, the U.S. has blocked loans from the World Bank to Nicaragua. This blockade exists in spite of the World Bank's own report that the Sandinistas have consistently met their payments on the debt inherited from Somoza, that Sandinist economic policies have been realistic and effective, and that the private sector has been generously treated.

Despite the fact that the Sandinist government has increased its credit to small farmers, resulting in substantial agricultural improvements, that great advances in health and education have been made, and that the Sandinistas have continually attempted to follow World Bank policies, pressure from the U.S. has convinced the World Bank to decrease its aid to Nicaragua. (*South Magazine*, Nov./82).

Multinationals have also participated in the economic war against Nicaragua. Nicaragua recently nationalized its banana plantations, agreeing to pay \$13 million in compensation to Standard Fruit in return for technical assistance. \$8 million had been paid when Standard Fruit broke its contract and left Nicaragua, ostensibly because of lack of profits, although both markets and prices had increased in 1982. Banana companies in Central America have a long history of corruption and Standard Fruit has been accused of deliberately slowing production before its illegal pull-out. The action of Standard Fruit might have resulted in massive unemployment and internal tension in Nicaragua but the Sandinistas pursued an independent marketing plan. Standard Fruit, United Brands, and Del Monte launched a propaganda campaign, saying that Nicaraguan fruit was inferior and chemically contaminated but California wholesale firms found the fruit to be of superior quality and paid \$5 a box to Nicaragua while the multinationals receive \$3 a box (*The Guardian* Jan. 19/83).

The policy of the U.S. and the multinationals has been an attempt to crush what seems a viable social revolution devoted to meeting the needs of the majority of the Nicaraguan people. In 1979 the Sandinist National Liberation Front overthrew the 43-year old Somoza dynasty. Supported by the U.S., the Somoza regime was characterized by extreme cruelty and corruption. Amnesty International recognized the last of the Somoza despots, Anastasio Somoza Debayle (later murdered in Paraguay by rival drug peddlers) as one of the world's worst human rights violators.

After the revolution the Sandinistas implemented civil liberties. Capital punishment was abolished and many of those who had aided Somoza were allowed to leave the country. Freedom of the press and political rights were established. Forced labour was abolished, working conditions improved, work hours reduced, and an hourly wage replaced piece-work payments. The minimum wage was increased, rent and price controls introduced, and there was a concentration on labour-intensive projects such as the construction of roads, sidewalks, and public parks in order to create employment. Public loans were made to cooperatives, schools were built, and there were improvements in