

READING WEEK

the myth of student demand

By Fiona Campbell

The Union reports increasing pressure from students to have GFC incorporate the reading week in the upcoming spring break. An unsolicited petition from Lister Hall was signed by over 850 students. Petitions are also being circulated from Biltek's office to have reading week brought into effect this year rather than next.

Academic President Dave Biltek described the action being taken as indicative of student feeling on the strength of their power. "I think this issue is important because the students have asked for it...it has become a test of the myth of the student demand. This is not a frivolous request...it is backed up and has had good experience in the past. If the students want this and feel they should have it, its their time...and they should get it. This has become a pressure group for the administration as well as the students who are reps on GFC. It has meant committing oneself in various degrees of responsibility--from signing ones name to a petition. "Organization is the key." he said.

A spring break may be in the offing for both faculty and students if a Student's Union sponsored proposal receives GFC approval January 31.

This proposed second term reading week would afford students time for work, study and general relaxation. It would be held the last two days of February and the first three days of March.

Academic Vice President, Dave Biltek has been deeply involved since September in the

research of this proposal. Twenty one letters to Canadian universities that now include a spring break were sent out. Their replies were correlated into the proposal. A single negative reply was received, but the individual indicated that there were as many reasons for the break as against. A referendum on the reading week was held at the U of A in November and 91.5 per cent of the students voted in agreement. Academic and non-academic staff were also consulted; of the three hundred questionnaires mailed out, one hundred were returned: forty seven per cent agreed with the idea, twelve percent were indifferent and forty two percent disagreed.

Replies from the other universities contacted commented on factors from increased work loads in recent years to the depressing aspects of the length of the Canadian winter.

Student Health Services and Lister Hall Nursing service report a great increase in cases in February-March period. Student Counselling reports that most students who drop out at this time do so for academic and health reasons. It is thought that a break at this time would aid in relieving the pressure both from a physical and a mental standpoint.

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Reaction from the Faculties is generally favorable, but not for its implementation during this academic year. A cursory survey revealed no vigorous objections in the Commerce Faculty.

However Dean Coutts of Education opposed its incorporation this term. Many professors have determined their course content, lecture series and laboratories on basis of this academic calendar year, and a week's cancellation would seriously disrupt their agendas.

"It's changing horses in mid-stream. I don't think it's sound administration," said Dean Coutts. However, he sees reading week as "re-creation" as opposed to recreation. Acting Dean of Medicine was opposed to the concept of a spring break both for the students of his faculty and for the student body in general. The medicine students now have either one day off a week, or two half days off a week. He views this as being more beneficial than increasing the course load during the term and lumping the student's break into an uninterrupted week.

Dean Ford of Engineering was sympathetic to the idea of an

extended break this term as long as it was not at the expense of class time. He felt that the time could be added to the end of term. "The academic year is already too short, compared to the other schools in the U.S."

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GAYS...

What is a homosexual? A homosexual is a man who, though he may have sex with a woman, prefers to have sex with another man. He does not generally act like, or wish to become a woman.

How does one become a homosexual? I know that a few Psych students may disagree with me but I feel that the theory that holds the most water is the following. Freud tells us that a child starts to develop its sexuality around the age of 5 years before that he is bisexual. If the child has a domineering mother and a withdrawn father or if the father is absent this causes a lack of the masculine role pattern in the family. I am not saying that all homosexuals are effeminate. (only a 5 per cent minority of all gays are obviously effeminate). The lack of a strong male influence, and the domineering and overprotective mother precondition the child towards homosexuality.

This does not mean that all children that have this type of parental structure will be gay, rather, it may be the primary enjoyable sex experience that the child has that he actively participates in and wishes to repeat. This means that if a child's first sexual experience is homosexual and he comes from the type of family background described above he will almost certainly be a homosexual. If his first experience is gay and he does not have the necessary family pre-conditioning then he will be heterosexual, bi-sexual, or possibly even gay. (Please note the terms that I use like gay and homosexual are interchangeable and for me and most others they mean the same. Also please note that I am using only the male sex for convenience sake, what I have written also applies to women who are gay, but in reverse.)

How does one go about meeting other gays? For most gay people meeting their first gay is difficult--it is difficult for the untrained eye to detect a gay person. Fortunately organizations like G.A.T.E. (Gay Association Towards Equality) are taking the difficulty out of this meeting for the new gay. In Edmonton one has only to phone 482-2529 or write to box 1852 to obtain the necessary information. In other Canadian cities one could check the local visitors bureau or get a

copy of the local underground newspaper and look in the Help Column, or write to Box 8969 Station H, Vancouver 5, B.C. for a copy of Roedy Green's excellent "Guide for the Naive Homosexual."

In the past meeting another gay was always a very clandestine experience. Today as homosexuals are becoming more open about their love for other men, and as they are refusing to hide by appearing on radio and T.V. (and writing articles for newspapers) it is becoming easier for anyone (both gay and straight) to meet one. Homosexuals tend to gather in certain places but because these change often I will not mention them here. Besides gay meeting places and predominately gay bars there are also gay clubs.

What is a gay club like and what happens there? A gay club could best be described as a discotheque for gays only. A club usually consists of a large room with tables and chairs around the edges, a cleared space in the center, a juke box in one corner and a bar. The bar does not serve alcohol in Alberta as the clubs here are not yet licensed; however on two "Liquor nights" per month booze is available. In B.C. the bars sell only mixer and one can B.Y.O.B. any time the club is open. Some B.C. clubs have licences.

At the club one has a chance to meet one's friends, other gay people, and behave in the way one would generally like to in public. This means that guys hold hands, kiss and dance with one another. The juke box mentioned earlier belts out loud popular music with a fast beat. There are also slow dances. The clubs are open until the small hours of the morning.

You may be surprised to hear me say that gay people are discriminated against after all homosexuality is legal. Yes, but, homosexual acts are only legal between consenting adults in privacy; this means that since the law is a federal statute adults are only people over twenty-one years of age, whereas the age of consent for heterosexuals is 16 and 18 years. The government of Alberta has determined that people over the age of 18 are mature enough to drink in bars, vote, enter into contracts, and get married but are not allowed to determine their own sexual preferences. The "in private" bit

information -- help

means that technically if I were to hold hands with or kiss my boyfriend in public that I could be liable to arrest for public indecency. (We have no cases of this as yet because no one has been brave enough to try it as they fear discrimination). We gay people would like the same rights and privileges to show public affection as heterosexuals. Gay people would like the right to have legal marriages. When two guys do get together and try to live together there are so many social pressures forcing them apart that it rarely lasts long.

The *Gay Alliance Towards Equality* is a group of gays who have banded together in the common cause to try and fight this type of discrimination. The guiding principle of the organization is the recognition of homosexuality as a valid and legitimate form of human emotion and sexual expression in no way harmful to society or the individuals concerned. From this flows our conviction that gay people have the right to the exercise of all human and civil right enjoyed by heterosexuals in our society.

How does G.A.T.E. help people??? By trying to EDUCATE people that homosexuality is not wrong or perverted, by providing an INFORMATION SERVICE where gay and straight people can get accurate information about homosexuality, by INFORMING gay people who have been discriminated against of their legal rights, and by giving out MEDICAL AND OTHER PERTAINATE INFO to gay people.

What are some of the problems of being a homosexual in today's world?? One of the biggest problems for most homosexuals is having to lead two lives. In the day time and during the week being straight, taking out the occasional secretary from the office and on the weekends going out with his gay friends and always hoping that the two lives never collide. It is infinitely harder for the married gay, as the tissue of lies he devises to get out of the house is often perilously thin. Imagine his wife's indignation when she discovers what kind of night out with the boys her husband has been having!!! Another of his great problems faced by gay people is when one really finds someone he loves

very much and wants to settle down with, it is often hard to keep the person due to the pressure pushing them apart. Often the one party cannot let their family know and must hide their homosexuality from their friends and co-workers.

As a gay person one has to be careful as to not allow girls not to become "hung-up" on you. One has to keep all relationships on a platonic level. This can be extremely hard if one cannot inform the girl of the fact that you are gay. And just the general air of secretness about the "other" life tends to put a strain on things.

Fortunately for me, to be gay does not pose such a great problem as for you. My parents are aware of the facts, all my friends, both male and female, know and thus, do not have the problems some people have. This does not mean problems do not exist. Due to the very public life I lead I find it hard to have a relationship for any length of time due to the fact that my partner fears discovery by associating with me. I would also like to find someone who is as open about themselves as I am so that we could express affection openly in public, and this type of person is very hard to find. I also find the gay scene to be generally sexist. Because of the secretive nature of the gay scene sexual relationships tend to become more important than human relationships and people often treat each other as walking sex objects rather than human beings. (These are personal views and may not be agreed upon by all)

A question I am often asked is "If you could change to a heterosexual with the push of a button would you?" My answer to this is you had asked me that when I was 15 or 16 years old I would have said "yes, show me the button." Now that I have

riddled myself of my guilt feelings, learned to accept myself as I am I have no desire to change.

I would like to thank the editors of this paper for giving me the chance to write this article. It is only through the dissemination of truthful information that people can learn that homosexuals are not all a bunch of sick perverts.

Michael Roberts



My name is Michael Roberts. To look at me I look just like any other person with no distinguishing mannerisms except that I am a little taller than most (6'2"). If you listen to me talk you will notice that I have an accent; this is because I was born in Africa and speak a second language as well as I speak English. I left Africa when I was nineteen and spent a year travelling in Europe and England. I have now spent almost two years in Canada and like the country very much.

I am interested in photography, all types of music, read quite a lot especially science fiction, enjoy going to a good movie now and then and watch television occasionally. I live on the twelfth floor of a downtown high-rise apartment and have a 9-6 job that I like very much.

After reading all that you may think that I sound just like hundreds of other average people that you know. Why all the fuss? What makes you different from us? You may ask. That is what I would like to know??? Why does society shun me???? Why does the law discriminate against me???? Why do my friends lose their jobs? or get kicked out of their homes?? Why?? Why??

You see, I am a Homosexual.

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G.A.T.E.-- Gay. Info Michael Roberts, Box 1852 Edmonton. ph. 482-2529.