

CHOPPING BLOCK

by Jens Andersen

Last weekend the *Gateway* hosted a Western Region, Canadian University Press (WRCUP) conference, an experience which turned out to be much like hosting a hurricane.

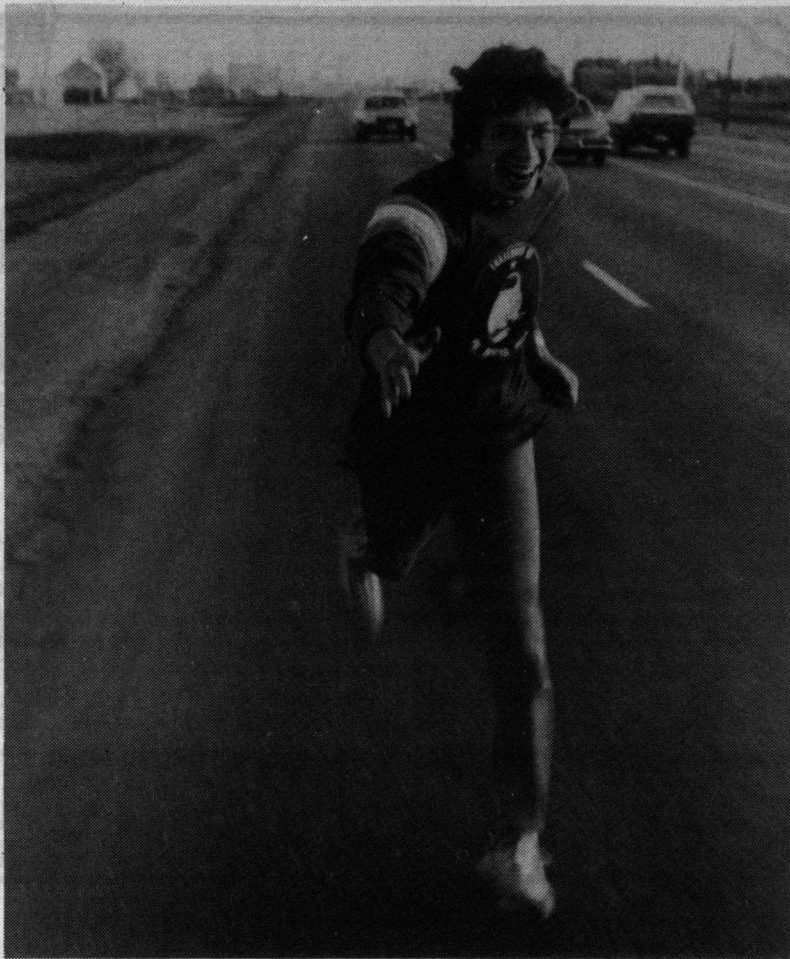
The central purpose of the WRCUP conference was, of course, orging and revelry, but a few other secondary matters were also dealt with. John Short of *Alberta Report* gave a seminar on the effect of recession on newspapers, which quickly wandered to other subjects and turned out to be the high point of the weekend (in my opinion).

It was a treat to watch the predominantly leftist audience of CUPpies try to fathom why an obvious conservative would blast not just the NDP but Liberals, PC's, WCC and indeed politicians in general ("The only way for a journalist to look at a politician is *down*"); or why such a tool of the capitalists once wrote a scathing editorial decrying Cominco's tax-exempt status in Trail BC and another time vigorously refused to knuckle under to a big advertiser who tried to suppress a news story.

WRCUP itself made some decisions at the conference, including such things as the election of officers for the Western Region. One decision that did *not* pass a vote by the newspapers, was a motion of censure against CUP's advertising agent, Campus Plus, which has recently done a survey of student readers. In a report to potential advertisers outlining the results of the survey, Campus Plus let slip the phrase "shape their lifelong purchasing habits through the only method that works," as well as making the observation that "Yes, they (students) do drink an inordinate amount of alcoholic beverages."

After it was pointed out that advertising has no other goal than the shaping of purchasing habits, and that students are second only to professional journalists in the volume of their guzzling, the motion to castigate Campus Plus for its low level of social awareness was defeated.

The biggest issue debated by the WRCUP delegates was a national ad boycott policy to deal with naughty



Three weeks ago I wrote a squib about the sexist nature of the phrase "women's fraternities," causing one frat acquaintance to ask me why I was bashing fraternities. Actually the thing had been a subtle dig at the feminist preoccupation with "evil" words, but it got misinterpreted.

A few days later another fellow came up to the *Gateway*, telling about his fraternity's participation in the Terry Fox Run. Great, I thought, coverage of the run will pacify the fraternities, which in fact I am violently indifferent toward.

But the story got mislaid. Twice. Despite reminders. Then it was postponed two whole weeks due to a glut of letters.

Here it is at long last.

The above gentleman and thirteen other Phi Gamma Delta runners ran in relays from Edmonton to Red Deer, to be met by runners from their colony at the University of Calgary who had jogged up. Altogether they raised \$3,200 for cancer research.

Which is more than WRCUP accomplished, for all its earnestness and heavy labors.

advertisers. The issue, indeed, is so controversial that over ten hours of conference time were spent debating it, and when the smoke cleared, the all-important guidelines as to who would be boycotted were still missing.

Nonetheless, WRCUP moved to get the boycott policy approved by the CUP National Conference in December, with guidelines to be formulated between now and then by

a heroic individual who will attempt to find common ground between 15 or so papers, who will submit individual position papers stating their individual positions on boycotts.

Judging by the wide variety of opinion, even among the pro-boycott policy newspapers who form the majority of WRCUP, I would be willing to bet that the heroic individual's head will blow up before

any consensus is reached.

But this is only the sketchiest picture of the boycott situation. The complete story is a farce whose intricate plot and numerous sub-plots would require a full-page feature to delineate.

Two aspects of a national boycott policy, however, are central and not likely to change. First is that a national policy would mean pro-boycott papers coercing anti-boycott and neutral papers to boycott (at present boycotting is a paper's internal affair). Second, the reasons for boycotting ads are so complex that creating guidelines is a virtual impossibility. Certainly WRCUP, after wrestling with the problem over two months and two conferences, has failed completely to come up with even the ghost of a guideline. Thus the only possible national policy would be to abandon guidelines, and make decisions on an ad-by-ad basis, taking into consideration that an information campaign must be waged simultaneously with a boycott, and that unless the boycott itself can be used for economic or publicity leverage it is merely a futile gesture.

WRCUP has tried to get around these two unpleasant facts, but in vain. No matter which way the boycotters aim their noses their bums still point backward. Any national boycott policy will come to grief if it insists on coercion or guidelines.

At the moment I write this it appears that a DeBeer's ad pushing crystalline carbon as a marital aid will be going into this issue of the *Gateway*. A copy of the ad was brought to the WRCUP conference and almost unanimously denounced as being sexist, and DeBeer's itself was drubbed for being an oppressor of South Africans. For these two reasons a boycott of the ad was strongly suggested.

Concerning the charge of sexism, I find it ridiculous. The ad is romantic baloney designed to fleece gullible males, but it doesn't paint a false picture of either men or women as a group (there is no implication that the glitzy couple in the ad photo are representative of their respective sexes).

As to the charges against DeBeer's: they may well be true, but at the moment we have no hard information, and everyone is innocent until proven guilty (except perhaps politicians). It would be embarrassing

to pull the ad and suddenly find that DeBeer's is a relatively humane employer by South African standards.

On the other hand, we have a researcher (not myself) working to get some reliable facts, and the situation may change.

Some thoughtful person without a name sent me two xeroxes from the *Guardian* (of Manchester?) regarding Irish economics and Japanese medical-experiment atrocities in World War II.

Whatever the reason for sending the xeroxes (I suspect someone wished to raise my consciousness, or move it leftward), the article on gruesome Japanese experiments on human beings is an eye-opener.

It is not without faults, though. At one point in the story the writer, one Robert Whyment, calls the atrocities "a numbing horror without parallel in modern times." Obviously the Nazis momentarily slipped his mind.

It is also worth noting that one of the Japanese who dragged the skeletons from the closet, Masaki Shimozato, says, "only a handful of communists opposed the (Second World) war." The allegation reflects rather badly on his eyesight (or his memory, or his biases) for, as every schoolboy knows, Yamamoto, to name just one non-communist, also opposed the war.

Miscellaneous notes: The lengthy letter to the editor which I brutally shortened last Thursday (to the point of omitting the writers' names) was by Gunnar Blodgett and Bruce Pollock. My apologies for the omission, but try to keep those letters short or I may lose my head again.

As soon as I get this boycott nuisance over with I'm going to get on with the things I should be doing, like a report on the reading competency of U of A students, and a story on the financial situation of our libraries, and a review of Taj Mahal, and a feature on the current state of underground comix, and...



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