

EDITORIAL

The real cowards

Remembrance Day has always bothered me, but not because I feel sorrow for those who died in both world wars. Instead, it bothers me because I would not fight, and because I am extremely uneasy watching people celebrate and argue for the defense of honor and country.

Young men in the United States lined up in droves to register for the draft this summer. This graphic demonstration of the belief that war is honorable and justice is strength is senseless. Instead, individuals must realize war cannot be justified in the name of a Nation or a Cause and they must be responsible enough to put a stop to rampant militarism.

The defiant (and unpopular) individual who would not, under any circumstances, fight for a country is usually called a coward, or worse, a traitor. But demonstrating a willingness to kill and die for undefined and unarticulated values is a greater form of cowardice: the cowardice that comes from blind and arrogant acceptance of authority.

It is simple to argue that there are causes worth fighting for, but this decision must absolutely be an individual one. Most supporters of "honor and country" argue, however, that if a cause is great enough for one man to die for, then it is great enough for many to die for. The problem is who is allowed to decide which causes are worth the sacrifice.

The people who decide are inevitably the ones who will not fight and who have the most to gain by a war. No major war has ever been fought without those in power using propaganda and manipulation to portray the enemy as a monster and the Nation as the final defender of Good.

Arguing that the "other guy" started the fight also misses the point, for once a nation stoops to the level of fighting they have given away the privilege of moral indignation and outrage by resorting to murder and violence. Murder on a national level is no less criminal than individual acts.

It is also a denial of humanity to elevate abstract and incomprehensible values above the reality of existence. Things such as Freedom, Justice and Goodness are not, and never will be, concepts with specific definitions, and it is the height of arrogance to assume one nation's definition is so correct as to justify the wholesale slaughter of its own citizens and the residents of other countries.

If an individual feels strongly that his cause is justified, there is precious little that can be done to prevent him from risking his life in defense of it. But to base a decision to fight on shoddy, slanted and poorly understood information (as is traditionally the case) is irresponsible. To further call the person who refuses to fight a coward is simply stupid.

Finally, to glorify the suffering and celebrate the valor of the men who fought in the wars is to legitimize their deeds. At a time when international sanity is in short supply, this sort of patriotic, emotional knee-jerk reaction can only increase the possibility of repetition.

Supposedly civilized beings must instead learn from their tragic errors.

Myer not a liar

Last Thursday's editorial has caused some misunderstandings. I did not call university president Myer Horowitz a liar, nor did I imply he would back down on his word. Rather, I pointed out that there was a great deal of pressure from within and without the university community to build in North Garneau and that Horowitz may not have the authority to withstand it. I regret the ambiguity which caused incorrect interpretations of my conclusions.

Keith Krause

the Gateway

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Cynical and hollow journalism

I feel I must comment on an article printed in the Thursday, November 6th issue of the Gateway concerning University Night. With this article the Gateway has indeed reached a new low in its already questionable journalism.

Not only did this report distort and misrepresent a very fine evening, but the cynical tone of the writing and the adolescent sneer of the photo caption puts the reportage in the (poor) junior high school league. Cynicism no doubt has its place in journalism, but the cynicism reflected in this article is hollow, without meaning, and totally uncalled for.

Also uncalled for is the absolutely juvenile name calling in the photo caption. It's not funny (if that was its purpose) and it carries no reason as far as I can tell other than for the thrill a six year old would experience because he was able to use a "dirty" word and get away with it.

In this case, it's an abuse of responsible journalism and brings into question just who the Gateway staff are answerable to in this university community. In terms of the responsibility that the paper should carry regarding the University of Alberta, it remains an embarrassing reflection on the quality of intellectual life on campus, especially for students.

I will go further and suggest that if the writer of the article found University Night "trivial," it is a reflection of his own sorry experience, of what he brought to the evening, rather than what most of us as students, staff, and MLAs felt was an interesting, stimulating, and altogether worthwhile event. Nolan Astley, Bob Kirk, and others connected with organising the night are to be congratulated for their efforts. University Night was an unqualified success and I, for one, hope it becomes a tradition.

As for the writer of this jaundiced piece of journalism, I would hope that he would summon up the intestinal fortitude he lacked when he wrote the article (he couldn't even sign his name to what was obviously an

editorial) and apologize to Gateway readers for an appalling lack of the requisite objectivity, of taste, and finally, of common manners.

Mel Blitzer
Grad Studies II

Caption pure flatulence

In five years I have never felt the desire to pick up my quill and expound my views on the inner pages of this "student's spokesman". I've let such issues as abortion, high tuition fees, rape, homosexuality, and yes, even the removal of O.V. from R.A.T.T. and Friday's, go by with nary a comment. Unfortunately my peaceful, apathetic existence was finally shattered.

Last Thursday, I picked up my copy of the Gateway only to be faced with the caption, "Three middle-aged farts...stand around and make faces at each other at University Night Wednesday."

Quickly glancing at the top of the page to assure myself that I was not reading a prematurely released copy of the Gateway, I readjusted my contacts and read, once again, the sterling prose previously quoted.

The idiocy of the caption deserves no further comment. However, before I conclude, may I suggest that the staff writers of

the Gateway invest in a copy of a College Thesaurus to ensure that, in the future, when an attempt at literary wit is made, it will at least reflect the educational level of the students it supposedly represents.

Les McCrimmon
Law II

Unjustly maligned

We feel compelled to respond to you, as editor, regarding the caption comment directed towards Dr. Steve Hunka in the Thursday, November 6th edition of the Gateway. It has been our understanding that one of the basic tenets in journalism is to "check the facts". Regrettably this does not appear to have been done in this instance.

Those of us who have worked with and/or had courses with Dr. Hunka realize his abilities, his personal style, and his sense of concern for and awareness of students speak for themselves. To see a "teacher" of his calibre maligned so unjustly and inappropriately is, we feel, deplorable.

When one perceives an injustice being done, it is negligent and irresponsible for us not to address it.

Sandra Elder
Elaine Gillingham
Patrick Carney
and 20 others
Graduate Students
Educational Psychology

STAFF MEETING

Thursday,
4:00 p.m.

The Gateway
Room 282 SUB