

Congress a sacred temple

The furor and moral outrage in the United States over the proposal to have Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev address a Joint Session of the U.S. Congress is symptomatic of the intellectual dishonesty on the part of some of the American political right.

Conservative Republicans and Democrats were justly horrified when it was proposed that Gorbachev speak to Congress.

Many Republicans planned to walk out on Gorbachev, or wear black arm bands in memory of the U.S. Congressman who died when the Soviet Union shot down KAL flight 007 with 269 people on board.

Such protests would have been justified. An address to the U.S. Congress should be reserved as a great honour to be carefully bestowed.

Great care in who is allowed to speak is called for but not often exhibited.

Gorbachev would not have been the first dictator to address Congress.

Ferdinand Marcos addressed a Joint Session. So did the Shah of Iran. Neither could be described as a paragon of democratic virtue.

Where were the conservatives when these two leaders spoke? The moral standards applied to Soviet human rights violations and political prisoners were no where to be found when the Shah spoke. Shameful.

The Shah's SAVAK secret police could go head to head with the Soviet KGB in terms of brutality, terror and inhumanity, but again the Right raised not a peep. Shameful.

Human rights in a sacred principle, and so is the honour attached to addressing the U.S. Congress.

Both are degraded when the moral acceptability of tyrants is viewed through the looking glass of the leader's political inclination.

If some parts of the U.S. political right are to have any integrity left, they must learn that the acceptability of a foreign leader must be judged not by his sympathy to the United States, but by the absolute standards of human decency.

Ken Bosman

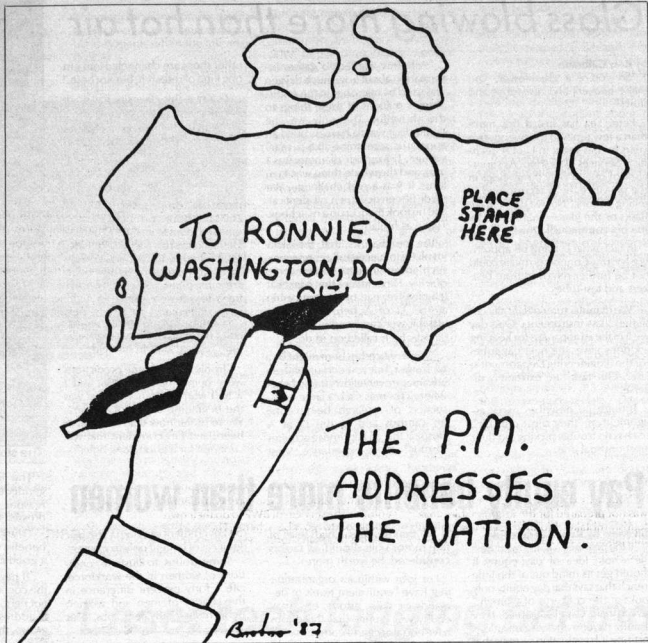
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Apology to the elderly

For some months now the University of Alberta, under the direction of president Myer Horowitz, has waged a campaign to force academics to retire at age 65. Although these actions readily appear to be motivated primarily by monetary considerations (i.e., one can hire two new graduates at approximately the same salary as a very senior experienced academic), a flagrant attack upon the elderly has been a deliberate and integral component of the University's strategy.

President Horowitz has made several public statements to the effect that it would be better to require academics to retire at age 65 than to let them continue on staff until they were forced to retire due to senility. Never in my entire academic career have I heard a more preposterous and misleading statement made by a university president.

As an academic and clinician who has not only worked with the elderly, but has edited two textbooks on geriatric drug therapy and served on several boards and committees related to aging, I can categorically state that intellect does not appear to show any general trends of decline until well past the seventh decade of life. This has been well demonstrated in several studies. These studies have, perhaps more importantly, pointed out the extreme variability in aging. That is to say that there are likely many individuals in their forties, fifties, or sixties, who are less competent than some individuals in their seventies or eighties.

I agree with president Horowitz that incompetent academics should be replaced, both to preserve the integrity of university education and to enable the hiring of young, promising new academics. However, I do not agree with his apparent "ageism", his apparent categorization of all older individuals as senile or on the verge of senility. Instead, I believe that all individual academics, regardless of age, should be individually evaluated against the well specified and delineated criteria of assessment that the University already has in place and should be adjudicated accordingly based on performance criteria, not

upon chronological age.

I have written this letter, not to apologize for my beliefs, but to apologize for my delay in publicly stating these beliefs.

In closing, let us consider the words of Emerson. "The essence of age is wisdom", or as stated in the Old Testament, "With the ancient is wisdom; and in length of days understanding" (Job, xii, 12).

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Textbook losses

Re: "Textbook Thefts", Roblee, Nov. 17, 1987

As a university employee, I check the lecture theatres attached to Tory Building every evening. I would be amazed at the amount of lost property we turn up: gloves, hats and scarves, pens and pencils, notebooks and ID cards and calculators.

Lost property is either sent (eventually) to Campus Security, after being picked up by the maintenance staff, or is left on the counters at the front of the theatres, in the hope that the owner will come back and claim it.

Wallets and purses are easy to return; there's usually a name and phone number where the finder can reach the owner. Books, however, are another matter. I've found a number of textbooks over the years, with no name or other reference where I can contact the person who lost them. Books worth \$40 or \$50 lie around for a few days, until they either vanish or are turned in to Security.

Karen Roblee is probably right - some people steal textbooks from their fellow students but I wonder how many books are actually misplaced and cannot be returned when they are eventually found. If people could take the time to scribble their name in their books (and on other items), they'd probably get them back a lot more often than they do now.

Peter McClure
 Technical Services

Bar None not guilty

It gives me great irregularity to read what some people are saying about BAR NONE. I think I am speaking for more than a handful of people when I say that those Aggies know how to party. This 41 year tradition of curing students' post-midterm pre-final blues has grown into one of Canada's biggest annual bashes. Aside from generating several thousand dollars for charitable organizations, it gives city folk a chance to put on their Wranglers & Justins once a year (except for some hallo-weeners who do it twice a year) and two-step on their partner's toes. Not only that, it gives some of the more "I-just-stepped-out-of-my-refrigerator" types something to complain about in this column and thus everyone is involved! Isn't it so special!

The only detriment to this festival glorifying barnyard animals is that it puts little red spots on some Aggies' lives, most of which you can play connect-the-dots on anyways. Let's face it, I think a lot of people find plastic people on sheep a lot less offensive than real "Lady Godivas" on horses.

In conclusion, we the jury find BAR NONE not guilty. If you really find BAR NONE not to your liking, you might want to go on that flower pressing exchange program you've always wanted to next fall.

Dave Holland

Letters to the Editor are encouraged and always welcome.

If you have a comment which would be of interest to the students of the University, please do not hesitate to send it in. All we require is your name, address, and phone number, and student ID if you are a student. We will not print letters missing any of these.

Letters should be no longer than three hundred words. Mail or deliver your letters to Room 282 SUBJ, or drop them at any SU information booth.