



Randal Smathers

Editor's note

One week ago to the day in this exact space, *The Gateway* printed a plagiarized column. Then the sky fell, and it didn't.

The article in question was by a volunteer writer for *The Gateway*, Kevin Law. He plagiarized an article called "No Deals" by Jared Mitchell in *The Globe and Mail's Report on Business Magazine* for October.

When we were told that there was a problem, our response was "Prove it: show us the *Globe* piece and we'll see." We got a copy of both articles, with the questionable parts highlighted, and ran a correction in our next issue. As per our policy, I consulted the Canadian Press style guide before writing the correction. I quote: "... it is generally preferable to get it over with—briefly and to the point, in one or two paragraphs, setting out the error and the correct information." Because it was impossible to detail what had been used in "one or two paragraphs", our correction read that the *Globe* article was used "as its (*The Gateway* article's) sole primary source, without attribution."

I have since contacted *Report on Business*, and they are satisfied with our correction and apology. I had hoped the situation would

end there, without further ado.

Unfortunately, we were not the only ones to receive a copy of both articles. They were also distributed to other potentially interested parties, either before our correction appeared, or despite it.

Students' Council has asked the Executive to consider what action—if any—is appropriate, using the same photocopies as reference materials. Alan Kellogg ran an excerpt from both articles in his "Entertainment" column in Wednesday's *Edmonton Journal*—although he refused to discuss his source with me. It is possible that he noticed both articles independently, or that the matter was brought to his attention by someone else.

Either way, the sky fell in on Kevin. He wrote his column with the intention of analyzing the *Globe* article, which he had read and strongly agreed with. Unfortunately, he did not attribute that piece, nor did he analyze it. He did plagiarize it rather badly. He assures me that he had not intended to do so, and I believe him, for a couple of reasons.

When he handed his column in, he did mention to the editor in charge—Philip Preville—that he had gotten his information from a *Globe* article. That in-

formation did not set off any alarm bells; just the opposite in fact. When Kevin told Philip that he got his information from a particular source, it was assumed not that there was probable plagiarism, but that he had done his research before writing his opinion piece—simply good practice. Even hinting that you used someone else's work is hardly consistent with a deliberate attempt at deceit, which makes me believe Kevin.

The other reason why I believe Kevin is that he has been with the paper for three years; first as a volunteer, then last year as a news editor, then again as a volunteer this year. His portfolio is full: padding it with a deliberately-lifted article would be needless, and folly at that. He was not on a deadline and desperate to meet it: this was an unsolicited article, which he wrote because he felt strongly about the subject. After three years, I doubt that he was desperate for the thrill of getting his name in print.

I cannot find a reason why Kevin would have deliberately tried to plagiarize someone, nor can I see how he could have hoped to profit from this article. Therefore, I chose to run a simple correction and apology, and to

apologize to the *Globe*, in the hopes that this aberration from Kevin's normally high standard would go relatively unremarked. For these same reasons, and because of our continued trust in Kevin, he will not be reprimanded by *The Gateway*.

The sky did not fall on *The Gateway*. Our reputation inevitably suffered slightly, but we do not make a practice of printing plagiarized material. Our editors cannot hope to read every article in every publication that may be used as a source, although we will all be more aware of checking for sources in the future. The subject will also be discussed in our next staff meeting with volunteers.

I was not trying to avoid embarrassment to the paper by printing a small correction in the last issue, instead of a column similar to this one, because although it is an embarrassing incident for our paper and for me personally as editor, we are, and will continue to be, judged on how good our last issue was, and not on the basis of a single column by anyone. I felt, and still feel, that nothing is served by over-publicizing this unfortunate incident.

That decision was taken from my hands, however. The fact that *The Journal* picked up on this incident has crippled Kevin's chances of getting a job with that paper, which is a damned shame because he is a fine reviewer who works hard at his craft. Alan Kellogg probably included the piece because he thought it was funny to catch *The Gateway* slipping up, but I'm afraid that I don't find publicly humiliating a volunteer for any organization funny, nor do I find it "Entertainment".

The fact that the Students' Council feels obliged to debate an editorial decision also indicates that the problem has been exaggerated. The very possibility that they could consider a motion of censure towards a volunteer writer is abhorrent to me (and such a motion is one of the possible outcomes of such a debate). The article ran in the paper and is therefore my responsibility, and I am prepared to answer for the way it was handled. However, any possible reprimand towards Kevin is an internal *Gateway* matter, and is not, in my opinion, debatable. I hope this column will answer most of the questions they may have. Again, I regret deeply the public nature of this debate.

The person who first started photocopying and analyzing the article said that he was concerned about *The Gateway's* credibility, and his concern was valid. However, in publicizing the problem through the photocopies, it has been blown out of proportion, not for the paper, but for the individual writer.

Ironically, if Kevin had deliberately plagiarized an essay and handed it in for credit, his punishment would have been far less. He probably would have been suspended for a semester or two, then allowed to finish his degree, but because DIE board deliberations are private, he wouldn't have been exposed to the kind of public ridicule that being exposed in *The Journal* involves, nor does he deserve to be dragged before Council and censured.

Kevin Law made a mistake, but he does not deserve the degree of punishment he has received for it. Case closed.

LETTERS continued

Perestroika still evolving

An Issue of Appearances...

There has been much debate and much reporting about the "new and improved" U.S.S.R. Gorbachev is purported to be restructuring and rebuilding (perestroika) the country, with a new emphasis on trade, openness, freedom, and arms reduction.

But just the other day, I found out about a relative of mine in the U.S.S.R. trying to send a small parcel to me. When she got to the post office, she saw a large sign: "No parcels may be sent to the United States, Canada, Australia, or Cuba." No explanation; no one dares to ask questions. Does that sound like a policy of a country where communism is crumbling, and a new attitude of openness is apparent? Mailing parcels may seem trivial, but this is in fact a new regulation, meaning that it has come into effect after the "reformation" of the U.S.S.R. had begun.

Would it be possible to have many other similar rules which restrict Russians' freedom of communication, knowledge, movement, speech? In fact, there are, but I will not even attempt to list them here.

The point of this letter is not to "bash the Commies" (as the saying goes), nor suggest that we have a perfect system in the West. My point is that many more things have to change before I am convinced that the "style" of Communism is evolving toward a freer and more democratic society in the U.S.S.R. It would be a mistake to welcome "perestroika" with open arms. Judge them by what they do in their own country, and what they do to their own people, not by what they say, or what they want to appear to be.

Victoria Stewart
Business II

Women's fraternity home vandalized

The members of Kappa Alpha Theta Women's Fraternity would like to address the individuals who vandalized our home on the morning of October 14th. Due to this incident we have incurred water damage estimated to exceed \$5000.00. This includes damage to the building itself and the destruction of irreplaceable historical items. As well as the damage that was caused, attempts were made to break into the house. We believe that these actions do not show the respect we feel we are entitled to as members of the Garneau community. As a fraternity we regard our house as a home.

These actions reveal a blatant lack of respect for the property of others and are considered criminal behavior. We are aware that those responsible consider their actions amusing, but we hope that they realize the inconvenience and irreparable damage that they have caused.

The Women of Kappa Alpha Theta

The staff at
The Gateway
wish to extend
a hearty
bienvenue
to the new
staff of
La Presse
Active.

A notre futur
ensemble!

Make your way to
the top of Mount Olympus...

Bacchanalian Bash III!

(a sequel amongst sequels)

Friday October 20
Tory 14th Floor
5 - 11 p.m.

No Drinking, No Dancing
Expensive Booze
Cerebral Conversations Only
Minimal Nudity!

