

## LETTERS

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asm, positive and negative, of so many York students on a Monday morning when the visit hadn't been announced to Student Council until the preceding Friday.

Yet, on Monday morning there were people with specific complaints about the troops in the Gulf, the GST, educational funding at the post-secondary level and more general complaints about Tory rule.

Everything seemed very pleasantly democratic. A political science professor proclaimed that rarely had he been more proud to be a part of York University. I had to agree with him. The apathy that is so often mentioned in regards to the York student body was lacking this time.

Gradually, however, this demonstration didn't seem so great after all. Hate messages began to pervade the chants for better national leadership and instead of criticism about government policy there were slanderous remarks about the prime minister himself. Appropriately, it was at this point that I lost sight of that professor.

Then when the PM arrived the really mature people showed themselves. These leaders in civility threw paper and macaroni and tried to barge through the conference doors endangering the safety of themselves and security.

In the process of this melee, the central monitor set up to watch the prime minister was disconnected. But what the hell eh, anything he says will be wrong anyway, right? Well maybe and maybe not; but, I don't think many of the protesters cared. The important thing to them was to overcome the weakening security and maybe get a good hip-check in.

I began to wonder if that political science professor was looking for a retraction. I certainly made one in my own mind.

Scott Bezeau

## Setting the facts straight

To the editor,

As a result of Faisal Kutty's Oct. 24 opinion piece (U.S., U.N. and Israel: Double standards), three response letters were written expressing opposite points of view. In so doing, they severely criticized Arab nations and Muslims by undermining their capabilities: "their inability to achieve consensus on anything beyond their visceral hatred of Israel."

As well, the letters mocked Muslims' ability to fight for what they believe in: "What pray tell would they have done? Sent him nasty letters?" [To get Saddam out of Saudi Arabia had he invaded it].

First of all, I would like to set the record straight concerning Arab people's attitude towards Israel: Arabs do not want to diminish the Jewish state. If they did, they wouldn't have defined clearly and officially the state of Palestine as East Jerusalem, West Bank and the Gaza Strip, about two years ago, thus following the resolution made by the U.N. council (#242, Nov. 22, 1967). This proves, once again, that Arab leadership is dynamic and progressive.

So guys, do not go back to history to support an already weak argument! Asher, you used the word "HATRED" in describing Arabs' attitude towards Israel. I

wouldn't come anywhere near that word if I were you since it indicates a racist attitude on the Arabs' part. I strongly reject the implied accusation that Arab people are a shallow, racist group.

Arab leadership is doing what it can to achieve the well-being of fellow Palestinians so that they can realise "PALESTINE," just as they want to retrieve Syria's Golan Heights and Lebanon's southern part which are under Israeli occupation.

On the other hand, Arab leaders want the Iraqi soldiers out of Kuwait as do Arab civilians. Yet, they have different theories on how to achieve this. Those who believed they were able to talk Saddam into withdrawing from Kuwait were not given a chance to do so and were accused of tolerating acts of aggression and supporting Saddam!

Many moderate Arabs argued that blowing Iraq's aggression out of proportion and "internationalizing" it by sending troops to the Gulf would make a peaceful crisis virtually impossible and a destructive war, inevitable!

War, if it occurs, would only lead to a massive loss of Arab, American, British, French, etc. lives. However, Arabs will be the primary losers since civilians' lives are in jeopardy, Gulf states' economies are on the line and, of course, war may not lead to the return of Kuwait.

Canada's vulnerable economy is already showing signs of further weakness, since we import oil from the Gulf and export large amounts of wheat to Iraq. What would happen to tax payers and Canadian soldiers; what would happen to Canada if, God forbid, war breaks out?

Secondly, I believe that Saddam Hussein had absolutely no intention of invading Saudi Arabia. And those who are really "open minded" would undoubtedly agree:

1) Saddam invaded Kuwait claiming it was part of Iraq; a part taken away when Britain was the colonizing power, while Saudi Arabia was not.

2) If, for one reason or another, he intended to attack Saudi Arabia why didn't he do so before American troops arrived?

3) Saddam appealed to ALL Muslims to stage a "holy" war against "Western attempts to colonize" which means that he is fully aware of the strength of Muslims which would be used to defend the dignity of Islam as a sacred religion.

And if you disagree that Muslims would overthrow Saddam and fight him had he attempted to occupy Saudi Arabia on which the two holiest shrines in Islam exist, take a look at some examples which will prove that when any religion's sanctity is concerned, there is no room for compromise.

1) Look at the unfortunate bloody events in India where Muslims and Hindus were fighting over a 16th century mosque built on a land the Hindus claim is meant for their temple.

2) Recall what happened about one month ago in Jerusalem, when 21 unarmed Muslim Palestinians were shot dead while protesting a claim by extremist Jews that the third holiest shrine in Islam is actually a Jewish one.

Asher, Clive, Aryeh on one hand and Faisal on the other give many examples in supporting the argument of U.N. and U.S.'s double standards, yet Asher, Clive, Aryeh given their examples in an argument pro-U.S. and pro-U.N., emphasizing that they have a

"democratic character." I will not accuse you guys of hypocrisy, but your argument is weak.

If you want to talk about attempts to diminish a population consider this: Israeis massacre, jail, exile and torture Palestinians and (worst of all) allow illiteracy, which will be overwhelming soon if they do not re-open pre-schools, schools and universities.

For all these crimes, where do you think the United States of America stands? On oil rich Arab lands...

Basil El Abdallah

## A shared experience

To the editor,

When I saw the cartoon, *Odyssey*, in the October 10 *Excalibur*, I felt a sense of community with the artist — here is a person with whom I have shared an experience.

The portrayal of the Christian in the cartoon as willing to go to nearly any length to convince the other rider to attend a Bible meeting was precisely as I have seen them the numerous times I have been approached on campus.

After reflecting on this for a moment, it occurred to me that there might be a kind of groundswell against the cartoon, and that perhaps I should write to the paper and share my feelings. When no such letter was forthcoming, I felt that the community simply recognised that many people feel cornered when approached by these people.

The letter "Religious Prejudice" in the November 5 *Excalibur* contained such an important fallacy that I was compelled to write.

Mr. Bloedow begins by telling you that consistency should be the guide when determining which kinds of attitudes we should be discouraging. Homophobia, sexism, and racism are such attitudes. The best reason that Mr. Bloedow has heard (one given in *Up York!*) is that in discouraging these attitudes, we would "make life more pleasant at York and make the atmosphere more conducive to education."

His point here is that if consistency is desired (and I cannot really disagree with this), then we would be logically bound to discourage what he calls "religious prejudice" — expressing our opposition to specific religions. The conclusion he draws is that we should discourage "expression of opposition to a specific religion" with the same vigour that we do sexism, etc.

The idea that "expression of opposition to a specific religion" should be identified alongside sexism, racism, and homophobia is that with which I take issue.

Women and people of colour, and gays and lesbians are discriminated against **because of what they are**, not what they believe — this is what is called sexism, etc.

But, saying that we must not tolerate (or at least discourage) "opposition to a specific religion" is tantamount to saying that no criticism should be mounted against the practices of **any** religion.

This, by itself seems ridiculous, but what a differing political, scientific, and pedagogical convictions? They are sometimes held with the same kind of fondness as religious beliefs. It can be

seen that advocating this kind of principle will land us on a slippery slope that will ultimately call into question the legitimacy of the University itself.

If we cannot call something into question, why gather to discuss these issues? True, people do feel "uncomfortable" when their ideas are ridiculed (most even when their ideas are so much as challenged), however the remedy is not to discourage criticism, but to engender gentleness in dialogue.

The cartoon in question pointed out, quite vividly, the practice that some Christians have taken up — that of approaching individuals in public, engaging them in conversation, then inviting them to a Bible group that often begins in an hour.

This corresponds quite well with many experiences I have had with these individuals on campus. There was no intention to 'deride' Christians (I hope), but to point out that the practices in which some of them participate (and not necessarily the values which they hold dear) annoy and make "uncomfortable" many of the people that they target.

Mr. Bloedow's argument falls short — if we are to "judge" people at all, we must do so *only* upon what they say, do, and believe.

Sincerely,  
Norman R. Gall  
PhD II, Philosophy

## Agreeing with NDP

To the editor,

I agree with the Ontario NDP that conservation measures (provided they are cost-effective) should be used to reduce the demand for energy, especially electricity.

But I seriously doubt that these steps alone can provide for the expected increase in demand and replacement of existing generating stations at the end of their useful lives.

As alternative sources such as hydro and solar are insufficient

J.M. McNamee  
Associate Professor

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