

# Elves replies to "inaccurate" SU report

Having read the front-page article in last Thursday's Gateway presenting the statement of Jan Grude, Vice-President (Services) concerning resignation I have elected to insert a letter in *The Gateway* for distortions and misquotes in the article call for response and collaboration.

That I shall return to university as a student is not my reason for leaving the Students' Union, through the convenience of that resignation certainly made my resignation easier. The fact is that the new position of Special Events Director, responsible for organizing Freshman Introduction Week, cabarets, RATT entertainment, forums and similar events, is a catch-all position created last spring in the attempt to amalgamate duties which have never been given much organizational support or recognition. Those who have done these jobs in the past years have always given more to the Students' Union than management and executives have been willing to acknowledge, whether financially or in the form of supportive resources.

Nor is Special Events the only area of the Students' Union which has been left to ride over the years as commitments and duties have increased. The Gateway and the executive itself have seen commitments and duties rise above recognition in the form of organizational support, union subsidy and personal remuneration.

A major anomaly of my position is that it is of a dual nature, being both administrative and political, managerial and creative. Organizing and promoting forums is a task quite different from managing and administering the cabarets, and

the pace and nature of the one are at odds with those of the other. (If the Vice-President would kindly re-read my letter, he would discover that it is not to "administrative shortcomings" which I "freely admit", but to having over-extended myself, particularly in organizing Freshman Introduction Week.)

The anomalies of my position are, I believe, simply indicative of the malady which has beset the Students' Union in recent years. From its proper role as a political and creative focus of student concerns and activities, the Students' Union has haemorrhaged into a corporation. The interests and duties of the elected officers have altered from an emphasis on representation and protection of the student body to one on administration and management of a corporation with large capital holdings, responsibilities to staff, and a profit-making ev. For this fact I censure no one, whether in the past or present of the union: is simply the historical development which Students' Unions at many campuses have seen and suffered from. Moreover, while the elected officers have ultimate control of this corporation, the physical facilities of the union become neglected and the staff abused, since student representatives do not possess the experience, expertise, time and breadth of perspective essential to proper management of such a large corporation; the managerial staff hired to fulfill such responsibilities are limited in their freedom to manage just as the elected representatives are limited in their freedom to represent and to politicize when under the burden of the exigencies of effective management of a large corporation.

To place this problem more in focus, the instance of the

cabaret program suffers from a dual responsibility; on the one hand, it is operated by political expedience as a method of raising money for various campus clubs and fraternities, and yet on the other hand the staff and Students' Union itself are exploited. If the Students' Union were given the freedom to use the cabaret profits it could develop the operation into a very professional one and cabarets could be pleasant places to be on Saturday nights. As it is, all profits go to the clubs and any loss is borne by the Students' Union. Not only the staff, but also the patrons, are exploited for the purpose of making money for the clubs and fraternities, for even though Dinwoodie Hall has seating for only 650, we sell 700 tickets. The place becomes so

full that it is difficult to relax and the press of the crowd so great that we cannot properly control these events nor provide beer in anything more breakable than wax cups. (Every week I am embarrassed to see beer go out in such receptacles: no wonder people become so drunk at Dinwoodie cabarets, for sipping beer out of a wax cup is so distasteful that the only way to drink it is to down it quickly. If we were to reduce the size of the cabarets we would likely not have to worry about the possibility of beer bottles being thrown and broken.)

As Forums Director I feel the most regret at leaving the Students' Union, for it has been forums which has given me the most satisfaction. The fact is that

I was not able to give as much time, energy and thought to forums as I would have had I been less fettered by other duties. Forums should not be administered by a full-time desk-bound employee, for the organization of such events as a method of promoting and articulating issues would be better handled by a student in regular contact with student life.

My letter of resignation was indeed "sharply critical" of the Students' Union, yet Mr. Grude's description of the parting as "amicable" is not totally inaccurate: I have appreciated the opportunity to work in such exciting activities as I have in the last year.

Doug Elves  
SU Special Events Director

## The politics of resignation

The resignation of Doug Elves as Students' Union Special Events Director is an issue worthy of attention from the entire student body, academic staff and even the higher echelons of university administration. Perhaps only a minority are really concerned with 'special events,' and perhaps even fewer persons either know Doug or care about his resignation. That notwithstanding, Doug's decision to resign from this very important SU position deserves a greater consideration from the University community.

We feel this is especially true after reading statements attributed to SU officials (see *Gateway*, Dec. 2) wherein they attempt to conceal the real reasons for Doug's resignation - i.e., exploitative working conditions. They further mystify the issue and simultaneously deflect legitimate criticism from their

doorstep by stating that, "he's leaving to go back to school. That's all." and quoting out of context Doug's statement "...I'm tired and I want a rest." Just for the record, Doug's reasons for taking this action should be made clear to the *Gateway* readership.

Since assuming the position in July, Doug has focussed his energies and attention on SUB Forums in an attempt to shake the silent complacency of a collectively apathetic and individually self-serving university community. The forums he organized were not designed to recapture the political consciousness of students of the 1960s; that is, they were not motivated by historical nostalgia. They were, however, motivated by contemporary political issues of the 1970s (from native land claims to exploitation in Southern Africa) and the premise

that students and staff should be discussing these and other issues.

The reasons for student politics becoming increasingly reactionary are many and varied, however, the perceived opposition by the SU executive to progressive political forums on this campus is another matter entirely - and one which perhaps raises the reality of a conflict that the executive would prefer to go unmentioned. Personal conversations with Doug has led many to believe that such a conflict (among other more important conflicts) played some role in his decision to resign. Furthermore, the statement made by vp services to the effect that conflict was nonexistent in this case seems untrue, as it becomes clear upon more critical examination.

Doug's resignation letter makes it perfectly clear that a major conflict developed with regard to the job classification that he tried to fulfill. In addition to organizing SUB Forums - a full-time job in itself - his duties included organizing RATT entertainment, cabarets and other 'special events.' And organization here refers to making certain that all aspects of these functions were carried out satisfactorily. As Doug puts it, "I had to become agent, promoter, supervisor, bookkeeper, technician, host to guests, sometime foreman, 'gopher', frequent poster designer and distributor, and even a political broker of Students' Union funds." Of course there would be no "conflict" if employees would just do what they are told to do....

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## Profs protest chairmen's power play

Department chairmen at the University of Alberta have issued "A Proposal for Reorganization of the University Governing Structure." Their proposal was published in *Folio* Nov. 25.

We take any proposal to change the university's governing structure very seriously. The present proposal, coming as it does from chairmen, is an important initiative by an important administrative group.

The chairmen who endorsed this proposal, however, are not a constituency in the ordinary sense of that word. Furthermore, the motivation of chairmen to "streamline" decision-making processes in the name of broader academic principles (i.e., to allow greater support for the "prime functions of ... teaching and research") may be suspect because, among all groups, chairmen in terms of power stand to gain a great deal by this proposal.

It may be the case that chairmen supporting the proposal believe themselves interested in the implications of possible adoption, or that they sincerely believe the proposal would go a long way towards improving administrative efficiency and the quality of decision-making and then enhance accountability. We are more skeptical than they, however, and we are surprised that they seem not to have questioned their own partisan position in advocating their proposal.

In our opinion the proposal advanced by the chairmen is not the way to go. In the first place, the chairmen in their document have given no thought whatsoever to the rehabilitation of

General Faculties Council. They too easily are willing to transform GFC into an "influential internal university forum."

Until demonstrated to the contrary, GFC remains the only statutory forum representative of all the constituencies of the university. The chairmen could have performed a valuable service if they first had concentrated on reforms aimed at making GFC work.

Secondly, the chairmen have assumed that a "University Council of Department Chairmen" (along with a "Council of Deans" and senior administrative staff) would be more successful in solving the serious problems facing the university. In our opinion their assumption is wrong. Without question the recommendation to create a chairmen's council together with other recommendations in the proposal would streamline decision-making processes.

But the proposal in the overall, if ever adopted even in principle, would sanctify administrative criteria to the neglect of nonadministrative criteria - including the legitimate interests of the academic and nonacademic staff and students. If our interpretation is correct, the proposal by the chairmen should be viewed more properly as a proposed problem for the university rather than as a solution for ongoing problems.

We have other specific concerns but brevity demands that we highlight only the following. In our opinion the chairmen have made a grievous error by suggesting the reversal of the university's policy with respect to staff and student participation. (We appreciate that the chairmen

would argue that they have not advocated such a reversal, but it is our opinion that such is obviously the practical consequence of their proposals.)

Staff and student participation in policy making are critically important if the university is to meet academic objectives and achieve highest standards. The input of chairmen is equally important; but chairmen (with deans and senior administrators) will not perform as well as they might, even though they may sense greater control, without the representative help of staff and students.

Former President Wyman, speaking in support of the question of significant student representation on GFC Feb. 3, 1971, said "We must view ourselves in the first instance as a university community, and we must believe that there is a common objective towards which we can all work together."

"We must have a spirit of mutual trust so that each of us can do the work assigned to us by the community. Whether one calls it democracy or by any other name, it is a fact that people want to have a role in the decision-making processes that govern their lives."

We agree.

Perhaps those chairmen supporting this proposal need to be reminded that the university is not an oligarchy, if ever it was. Indeed there are failings in GFC as presently constituted. Chairmen as well as students, staff and senior administrators together are equally to blame and equally responsible in the search for remedies, not only with respect to university government generally, but especially as

regards the role to be played by General Faculties Council.

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## Elderly wrist-slapper

Dear "ombudsman"

Your recent column "dealing" with stress has hit the bottom in superficial journalism. It might be expected that students writing for a student newspaper will occasionally exhibit their immaturity and periodically demonstrate in public their infantile reaction to the adult world of reality. But as students we really do not need to be reminded of our adolescence, indeed our infancy, which we are supposed to have long since left far behind.

The problems of a child are solved by 'soothers,' temper tantrums, cuddling, fuzzy animals, etc. You have decided that the same crutches are adequate for adults with only the form changed. Fortunately for this campus there are very few who like yourself see the student

'stance' under stress as a foetal position.

It is just such a surprise to find someone who presumably has received a High School education and perhaps even has a year or two of University completely unaware of the complexities in modern living. It is also surprising, even shocking, to discover in the trendy 'with-it' prose a student in our midst who subscribes to the snappy Ann Landers 'bandaid' approach to the problems of our time. The only way we can possibly accept your article is to pretend it is all a joke (though a joke without humour) or to consider it quaint and amusing that a certified idiot has gained admission to our institution and is presumably alive (though perhaps not well) and living amongst us.

Phil Burt