

Read the news

In searching for a topic for this editorial, I found that I was drawing a blank. Why? Because I haven't been keeping up with the news. I know vaguely what's going on, but vaguely is not enough. So, instead of doing some quick research, I thought it might be wiser to analyze the reasons why I (along with many others; you know who you are) am lazy about keeping in touch with current events.

The classic excuse is that you don't have time. After all, you're in university, right? Maybe you have a job, too. You don't have time to read the paper and watch Barbara Frum. And after a long day of lectures, who wants to be depressed by the news?

Besides, the news is so complicated. To understand the background of an issue, you have to spend time reading and in the meantime, the news is changing quickly; news events multiply like rabbits. You feel like a hamster caught in the treadmill of information. So why bother trying to understand it all if you can never catch up?

Add to this confusion the fact that every paper and magazine seems to say something slightly different, so how do you know who to believe? How are you to know what is true, and what is propaganda?

There are too many issues. Where are you supposed to start? Provincial or national politics? The relationship between Canada and the States? NATO? Communist countries? There are all too many hot spots, most of which have been boiling for years without coming any closer to peace: N.Ireland, Lebanon, South Africa, Nicaragua, just to name a few. You're probably tired of hearing about them. How can you decide which issue should be your priority?

The final question you always ask yourself is: How does it affect me? What does it matter if I know about it or not? What can I do about it anyway?

If this is how you think, if only sometimes, consider whether these reasons are substantial. First of all, you don't have to spend a lot of time to know what's going on. No one expects you to read the N.Y. Times every day, and watch every single news show. You don't need to, anyway. Just spending fifteen minutes a day reading a paper, or a half hour watching the news isn't much to ask. And if you avoid the news because you don't want to get depressed, you are deluding yourself; you're just wrapping yourself up in an ignorant cocoon.

Of course the news is complex, and only experts know everything about a certain issue. What's to stop you from learning what you can? To avoid being influenced by propaganda, it's best to get your dose of news from a variety of sources with different perspectives.

Too many issues? Well it's impossible to know them all. But since they're all important, why not start with the ones that interest you most?

O.K., now to answer the hardest question. The events of other countries do affect you, because no country is truly isolated in the world. There are political and economic ties among all the nations. Turmoil affects these ties, and even if it does not directly affect Canada, it may indirectly affect our country through an ally or an enemy. Certainly any disturbance contributes to the increasing instability of the world, which will affect all countries in the future, if not now.

If you fail to recognize these ties between countries and the importance of maintaining stability, you are isolating yourself from the world. Canada is geographically isolated enough as it is; we don't need human isolation as well. Isolation fosters ignorance, indifference, and prejudice. If you never read, think, or talk about issues outside of your own little sphere, your ability to care for others is limited. An indifferent, uncaring world is a dangerous one. So read the news, try to understand the problems of other places. Even reading about them does help to solve them, if only in a small way. By making the world a bit more aware, it allows for greater compassion and peace.

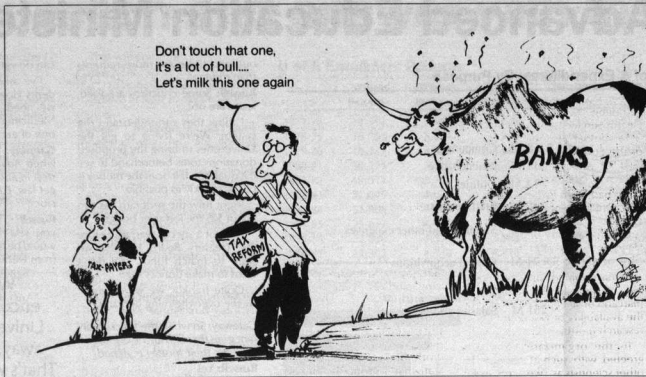
Elaine Ostry

The Gateway

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Gateway grow up

Re: Picture, Nov. 19 Gateway
 Hey, wouldn't it be wonderful if the enlightened students at the university could present issues of social concern informatively and sensitively?

Take for example, the issue of AIDS. Could the Gateway include an article about AIDS without attaching some tasteless and inappropriate picture to it? Apparently not. The AIDS issue is one concerning people, not people's genital parts.

Grow up already.

Silvia Marchesin

Dangerous stairs

In recent years we have seen an extensive renovation of Cameron Library due to a potential health hazard. Particles of asbestos insulation were presenting a risk of lung cancer to library staff and patrons, so the insulation had to be removed at great expense and inconvenience.

I would like to call attention to another potential health hazard in the same building. The railings in the stairwells are only about 85 cm. from the floor (well under 3 ft. for the old-fashioned among us).

It is not difficult to visualize a situation in which an accident could occur. A little horseplay by a group of stressed-out caffeine junkies at exam time, a little panicky pushing and shoving during an emergency evacuation of the building, a sudden attack of dizziness or illness, a slip on a wet floor in winter, any of these circumstances could result in a tragedy. Tall people are especially in danger.

The building staff are quite concerned and aware of the problem, but of course they have no say in the expensive renovations that would be necessary to make the stairs safe. This responsibility falls on those higher up in the administrative structure of the university. I hope that funds can be found for safety even in the current time of restraint, as they were for the asbestos problem.

Bill Sveinsson

On your feet

Re: Remembrance Day
 Mr. Janzen; our war-dead fought to preserve freedom, not obtain it. Haven't you heard the phrase, "It's better to die on one's feet than to live on one's knees"?

Kevin Webster

A taste of Israel

An advertisement in the Nov. 19 Gateway urges us to "come and taste Israel: Hummus, Tahini, and Kibbi and other original Israeli foods..." Rubbish!

These are all typical, traditional and original Arab foods with original Arab names. But, perhaps this backhanded

Israeli accommodation to Arab culture could be a good sign.

As the Mongols once invaded China but were eventually absorbed by the Chinese maybe the Israelis having invaded the Arab lands will eventually be absorbed by the Arabs.

Harold B. Barclay

Bar None brand

Yahoo and ride em' cowboy? I've been branded by Bar None. Yes, the agriculture students did have a great time last week, and I am glad to see students showing university spirit.

However, I am not sure I agree with some of their...uh...shall I say tactics. At the time of the Ag. parade, I happened to be in Rutherford library. I stopped to watch the procession from a window when I got it from behind (literally) with a sticker. I was rather surprised and can understand that it was all in good fun, but I'm not so sure sticking someone from behind is the most appropriate thing to do.

For next year, I'd like to suggest that Ag. students stick people in some innocuous spot.

Kisa Mortenson

"Low-class cowboys"

I would like to express my comments regarding the recent Agricultural Student's theme week. On November 19, a cow and a sheep were placed within a fenced enclosure in the quad area. Initially, when I saw these animals I laughed because it was not only unusual seeing livestock on campus, but also I thought it was a unique way of expressing an "agricultural" theme.

However, my laughter turned to anger when I once again saw these animals. Specifically, I was upset upon noticing that the sheep now had an inflatable doll attached to its hindquarters. It was at this point that I felt the individuals responsible had crossed the line between having a "good time" and being vulgar and offensive.

Let me state at this point that I have nothing against having fun or against theme weeks in general. Nor do I hold any personal animosity toward agricultural students. However, I do believe that fun and humor should consider the qualities of good taste and good judgement. I believe that "dressing up" animals, even common livestock as some may refer to these animals, in a sexually explicit manner displays considerable poor taste and poor judgement on the part of those responsible.

The purpose for this activity is unclear to me. Perhaps those responsible thought dressing up a sheep was a fun thing to do; that it would make others laugh; or that it was a cool thing to do and others would think it a "cool" thing also. I'm not quite sure. I personally doubt that there are many who consider attaching an inflatable doll to a sheep's

hindquarters a "cool" or "hip" behavior. In fact, I think many people would consider that behavior disgusting. If those responsible were competing in a contest for the best display of vulgarity and poor judgement, then they should feel secure in their likelihood of winning.

Furthermore, I believe that this type of activity fosters an attitude which condones abusive behavior toward animals. While I do not believe that those responsible support this attitude or intended any harm toward the animal, this action directly lends support to the view that "one can do whatever one pleases to an animal", perhaps even abuse it and this I find unacceptable. It seems peculiar to me that agricultural students, who may eventually earn their livelihood from these animals, should choose to exploit them in such a degrading and meaningless fashion.

Activities like this do not lend themselves well to gaining respect for the agricultural faculty or industry and serve only to support the negative stereotype of agricultural students (as a fellow student expressed to me), as "low-class cowboys".

Nancy Casement

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 you letters to Room 282 SUB, or drop them at any SU information booth.

Do you feel like really looking into things?



Write feature stories for The Gateway.