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# The Gateway

Thursday, April 4, 1985

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P.T. Barnum

## Students accuse religion department of bias

by Suzette C. Chan

A decision by the Religious Studies department has led to a petition and questions regarding the biases of the department chair.

Leslieanna Blackner, a third year Fine Arts student, says Religious Studies chairman P.J. Cahill is deliberately trying to emphasize Christianity at the expense of Eastern religions, such as Chinese and Indian Buddhism and Taoism.

"The chairman of the department is a Christian and he's building up a little empire," said Blackner. She said the first piece of evidence supporting her conclusion is a departmental decision not to rehire a sessional currently lecturing on East Asian religions.

"Their principle of letting Lawrence Lau go is that he was a replacement for Dr. Waugh, who was on sabbatical last year," says Blackner. Because Waugh's specialty is Islam while Lau's area of expertise is Chinese philosophy, history and religion, Blackner feels the decision to hire Lau in the first place was "a weird idea."

Lau who earned a history degree at the U of A before going to UBC to study and teach, was signed last year to an eight-month contract. Waugh is back in 1985-86, but Blackner says this still leads to the problem of inadequate representation of East Asian religions in the Religious Studies program.

"The full staff appointment will be here next year, but out of eight sessionals, none is specialized in East Asian studies," says Blackner.

Blackner's second contention is that the department will offer 11 classes in Christianity but only five in East Asian religions.

"Cahill says they rotate courses every four years, but that hasn't been the case," says Blackner. "They've held the Christian ones and rotated the East Asian ones. This is particularly upsetting because students in East Asian studies don't have access to institutions like St. Joseph or St. Stephen."

St. Joseph and St. Stephen are two colleges administered by the U of A with special emphasis on Christianity.

"If you're interested in Buddhism, there's no place to go."

In an interview with the *Gateway* on Wednesday, Cahill defended his actions.

"We picked the courses in the traditional way," says Cahill. "It's a cycle of courses repeated every year according to demand."

Cahill refutes figures shown to him by Blackner in a meeting Wednesday with some of his own. Blackner had a list compiled by the Religious Studies department which showed that trends indicated dramatic growth in the East Asian Studies enrolment while Christian Studies enrolment has maintained a slow growth.

According to the statistics, 27 students were enrolled in East Asian Studies while there were 64 Christian Studies students. In 1984-85, there were 131 East Asian Studies students compared to 85 in Christian studies.

Cahill says he has compiled a set of "adjusted" figures that show an enrolment of 600 in Christianity

classes, but he did not give a figure for the number of those taking East Asian religions courses.

When asked to comment on a 156-signature petition to keep Lau on staff circulated by Blackner and others, Cahill would only say: "That kind of question we get frequently. In the past three days people are asking why there is not more Christian Studies, Islamic studies, thematic courses and Far Eastern Studies. We do our best to satisfy our various constituents by basically following the cycling procedure and (based on) staff resources."

In any case, Cahill feels there is much to learn about Christianity.

"People have to recognize that religion is not monolithic. You cannot regard the teaching of Christianity as one religion. If you get a person of the Greek Orthodox, that's different than if a Calvinist teaches."

Blackner says Cahill told her there was no way the department could reverse its decision on rehiring Lau, but when he was speaking to the *Gateway*, Cahill said: "The department can reverse any decision if the chairman and the people involved (in the initial decision) approve."

The man at the centre of the controversy, Lawrence Lau says he is "impressed by the enthusiasm of the students" in lobbying for an extension to his contract.

He says compared to other universities, the U of A Religious Studies program is inadequate.

"At UBC there are some classes in East Asian religions. Calgary has a very good program. At the U of A, it was not too bad before, but it will

be unbalanced next year."

Lau feels the minimum number of courses the university should offer in East Asian religions is four more half courses in addition to the five it is offering next year.

Cahill, on the other hand, feels that would mean an imbalance in the Religious Studies program. Cahill counted four Christianity classes offered by the department last year compared to nine East Asian religious courses. However, he did not count the Christian courses offered at St. Joseph and St. Stephen.

Lau agrees with Blackner that there is much easier access for students wishing to learn about Christianity compared to those who wish to study East Asian religions.

"There's access to other institutions such as Neuman's College, King's College and Concordia College. And there's so many churches in Edmonton and in Alberta, but there's no access to East Asian religions. There are no temples here. The only opportunity (to learn about Far Eastern religions) is at the university."

Although his future is in doubt, Lau is overwhelmed by the student support for the program and for himself.

"To me, it's not whether I stay here or not. I'd like to see a strong representation of East Asian religions classes in the department," Lau says. "I appreciate the student support. I'd like to stay because students want me to teach them. I impart knowledge that is not found in a book. They find me genuine. It's out of their sincere concern that they undertake this movement."



Photo Dan Watson

## Grant a surprise

by Gilbert Bouchard

The Alberta government is only a million dollars short of honoring its matching grant commitments after MLA Julian Koziak presented U of A Vice-President Academic Peter Meekison with a cheque for 3.7 million dollars Wednesday afternoon.

"The government matching loan program is now complete," said Koziak. "The program set aside 80 million dollars in the decade to encourage Alberta's post-secondary institutions to solicit corporate and private donations. This 80 million was expected to last the whole decade but was depleted in half that time."

Koziak said all the funds have either been allocated or are now enroute. The U of A will be receiving another payment of one million dollars within the next few weeks.

U of A fund Development director Allan Hollender said the government's money will match "all cash contributions and capital gifts to the U of A. This money is above and

beyond the university's operating budget and will be invested in the same areas as the original donation."

"We've been waiting two years for this day," said Hollender.

The 3.7 million matches 751 individual donations varying from a donation of 95 dollars to a donation of 915 thousand dollars.

Hollender also added "this financial commitment has always been there, and the government is just clearing out the old commitments to clear the way for a new matching grant program that will probably be in place by September."

"We received notice on March 29 that a further million will be given to the university," said Hollender. "This million will clear the deck of the governments commitments."

Koziak echoed Hollender's comments and denied that the timing and the swiftness of the payments to the U of A coincided with rumors of a fall provincial election. "As far as I know there will be no election until 1986."

## Council to get tough on housing

by Bill Doskoch

On Tuesday night, Students' Council decided to get tough about lobbying Housing and Food Services (HFS), the *Gateway* suffered a setback and the *Grind* and the Students' Union and Community Daycare Centre received \$2,477 and \$4,000 respectively.

Housing and Transport commissioner Grant Borbridge opened discussion on the lobbying issue by listing the problems faced by students in Lister Hall and other residences, problems such as rates above Student Finance Board allowances and reductions in basic services.

After debate, the following were agreed upon:

- to request a review of the upper management jobs at HFS;
- to follow standard procedures of making presentations to the Board of Governors and try to reach a suitable settlement;
- to continue to make press releases and request press coverage discussing the problems and invite the media to the B of G meeting;
- and if a settlement isn't reached by April 23, to allocate \$30,000 to begin a media campaign against HFS.

A motion was put forth by VP Finance Christine Ens on behalf of the *Gateway* to sell advertising space at a 20 per cent discount to all

SU businesses and services in return for exclusive rights to all internal advertising for two years.

Eight categories of on and off-campus publications (such as the *Folio* and the *Journal*) and any other publication agreed to by the *Gateway* and the SU would be exempt.

The *Grind* was not included in the eight categories.

It was estimated that the agreement would save the SU approximately \$7,000 per year.

"The notion of saving \$7,000 is bogus, it's merely a journal entry," said science rep Ken Bosman.

"It really is morally improper to blacklist a publication (the *Grind*). If it's a logical business decision to put advertising in the *Grind* then let them (the area managers) do it," he said.

It was a journal entry transaction, agreed SU and *Gateway* Business Manager Tom Wright. "But once that money leaves the SU, it then becomes real money. It (the motion) is a savings and the purpose of it is to protect SU internal revenues."

Engineering proxy and VP Internal-elect Scott Richardson felt that any move to restrict the allocation of advertising dollars was a bad business practice.

Protection of the stability of the *Gateway* budget was the important

aspect of the motion, argued Arts rep. Don Millar. "At the whims of individuals, SU advertising revenues could be used to destabilize the *Gateway* financially."

However, after the smoke had cleared, the motion was defeated.

The Administration Boards recommendation to grant \$2,477 to the *Grind* was passed with little difficulty, but there was some concern over who would be in conflict-of-interest by being a *Grind* member and voting on the resolution.

"If they know the secret handshake they can't vote," Business rep. Rob Lunney suggested jokingly.

The request for \$7,000 to produce a leaflet to lobby the Government for better daycare was reduced to \$4,000. The suggestion was made that if alternate funding could not be found, the daycare centre could re-apply for further funding.

After last week's hulabaloo over amending the constitution regarding the building policy, it was passed in an amended more specific form.

As a humorous aside, Home Ec rep. Angela Barclay asked VP Internal Gord Stamp why he had phoned the head of the Home Ec club to have her removed as council rep. and if he had done this to any other councillors.

Stamp replied that councillors

had a moral duty to follow the will of the students which had been shown by the 78 per cent vote against the building policy. He said any councillor that did not want to carry out the will of the students "should be shot."

Barclay had voted against Stamp's motion in the Mar. 26 council meeting and was not amused.

Stamp was forced to retreat on his attempt to have the position of associate clubs commissioner created.

The position of clubs commissioner required an assistant, said Stamp, especially during September and October when clubs registration activity was at a peak.

"You've sure changed your tune in the last 24 hours, Gord," said Lunney, claiming that Stamp asserted that the position of clubs commissioner was an easy one to handle during the nomination meeting the previous evening.

After other attacks by Ens and Millar, Stamp withdrew the motion.

A motion by Bosman to allow members of the media selection committee to ask any questions they want of editor-in-chief candidates, within guidelines such as the Alberta Human Rights Act, was passed after it had been amended to make sure the questions pertained to the operation of the *Gateway*.