

Opinion

Rosa Jackson

"Danger Overload"



As our society reaches the stage where convenience is everything, our lack of regard not only for the environment, but for our own bodies, becomes increasingly evident.

Most of us are well aware that plastic and styrofoam containers contribute to the destruction of our environment. Yet how many of us, when we do our weekly shopping at Safeway, conveniently push this knowledge into the backs of our minds?

Another well-known fact is that the use of aerosol cans is degrading the ozone layer. But their long-term use is not the only danger to us. Have you ever read the back of a hairspray can? "May be harmful or fatal if directly inhaled." Or, worse yet, the back of a Raid can? It warns against staying in the room after having ensured the bugs' quick death — breathing in Raid fumes would no doubt hasten a deterioration in our own health. Yet, somehow it seems easier to buy these products than to search for those which are less harmful.

Then, there are the chemicals we consume every day in nearly everything we eat. A look at the back of a jar of coffee whitener, a can of soup or a bottle of salad dressing can be a frightening experience. We're not sure which of those multisyllabic chemicals might actually be harmful to our health, but how often do we even stop to think about it? Has anybody ever asked a movie theatre manager, "What exactly is 'golden topping' made up of?" Maybe it would be best if we didn't know.

This kind of thinking seems to be the key to why we continue to consume products which contain more preservatives than real food, and to use containers that are designed for convenience rather than safety. My theory is that our minds are suffering from "Danger Overload": we are so tired of hearing about the harmful effects of nearly everything we consume that we have stopped listening.

It seems that scientific progress is standing in the way of a progress in thinking in the public's mind. We never quite know whether to believe that something is carcinogenic, because new research so often contradicts old discoveries. One day a food may be good for us, but the next, it causes cancer. It's difficult to keep up with, and to trust, current findings.

I don't believe that the responsibility for controlling the use of dangerous products should be placed on the public's shoulders. Since plastic and styrofoam containers and aerosol cans threaten the earth's future, they should no longer be manufactured. If the decision to use or not to use these products is left to the public, concerned, responsible citizens will undoubtedly be outnumbered by those suffering from "Danger Overload."

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The Gateway is the University of Alberta students' newspaper. Contents are the responsibility of the Editor-in-Chief. All opinions that are signed by the writer do not necessarily reflect the views of *The Gateway*. Copy deadlines are 11 a.m. Mondays and Wednesdays. Newsroom: 282 SUB (phone 432-5168). Sports and production offices: 230 SUB (phone 432-5068). Photos printed in *The Gateway* may be for sale. Call the photodirectorate at 432-5168 or come by Room 235 SUB. Advertising: Room 256D SUB (SU Executive offices) phone 432-4241. Mailing address: Room 256D Students' Union Building, U of A, Edmonton, Alberta, T6G 2J7. Readership is 30,000.



Letters

The "C" Word

Now I know that a lot of you would rather see the "F" word in big bold type across the top of this page rather than read another letter that contains the "C" word. In fact so would I, because I'm getting a little sick of what the "C" word has mutated to over the last few weeks (or 2000 years, take your pick). For those of you who haven't guessed by now, the "C" word is not even mildly associated with anatomy 421. The "C" word refers to the disturbing term "Christians."

Over the last few weeks, I've read a few letters in *The Gateway* that use the "C" word and many other religion related words. This has led to a few questions. For example, how many members of the Edmonton Intercollegiate Chapter of Larch Fearing People are there on campus? Are these Larch fearers related to "fanatical Christians"? If the Larch Incarnate will forgive me, I believe they are related because of the seemingly common goal of sensationalism.

If we are to understand anything at all about a belief (whether it be a belief in the Larch Incarnate or Jesus) we must make a distinction between the sensationalists, who act and react solely for the purpose of creating an effect, and the people who are motivated by a sincerity in what they believe. Lately I think we've seen a little too much of the former. Our eyes grow sore and our stomachs turn every time we see or read about pompous, arrogant individuals or groups who proclaim "there can be only one truth about God and His purpose for mankind and, frankly, we have it". Sorry bud, but you possess nothing but a presumptuous arrogance which leaves destruction in its wake.

We ourselves have nothing to offer mankind, only God possesses that kind of wealth. He gave us what he deemed to be most valuable — love. He exemplified this through his son Jesus who took a genuine interest in people from all areas of life and cared for them. He did not throw pamphlets at them or even provoke them to take up fanatical religious actions. Instead,

he was fanatical in the way he expressed God's love. So when Galyne Howard writes "we may be 'fanatical' but that's because we don't serve God part-time", are we to understand that she is referring to the fanatical way that she enlightens people with what she has to offer, or is she sincerely excited about what God has to offer? Either way, I suggest that she think about what her motives for being fanatical are. Perhaps she might even begin with a definition of fanaticism. When she has decided on a definition what happens if I don't measure up to it? Will this mean that I am not serving God full-time? I think not.

In closing, I would just like to say that if some Christians were not so bloody arrogant, maybe, just maybe, some people might even want to know something about Jesus instead of being "turned off" because of the seemingly growing epidemic of pompous attitudes.

P.S. We do not belong to any religious group, not even Larch worshippers. However we do believe in following the example the Christ gave us.

P.P.S. So Galyne, why don't you just cool off for a bit and have a beer with us sometime.

Jenny Hankins
Michael J. Neufeld
Science II

"Basics" forgotten

Re: Illiteracy shocking (Nov. 10)

It's sad, isn't it? The lack of literacy in our school system is nothing short of criminal. I'm not sure what the fundamental problem is, but I think that what we are seeing is a basic change in the philosophy of teaching. According to some articles I have read, the move has been on to steer away from basic grammar. The philosophy now is more one of maintaining the students' interest by doing more creative work and less in the way of formal instruction. Granted, lessons in the various uses of the colon, semicolon, comma, period etc. can be quite dry. This, however, is essential "background" knowledge that any "literate" person requires in order to put his words into a coherent

format. I suspect, however, that you already knew that.

I think we have to look back along the system in order to find the sources of weakness which are at fault. I believe that it comes back to the teachers. Now, before all the Education students get riled up and start taking pen to paper, please read on...

Four years ago, I was a teaching assistant in a course that required a fair amount of writing. Students had to express their opinions (on paper) of articles which they had read. Almost consistently, the students who had the poorest grammar and the poorest spelling were the Education students. Admittedly, I was looking at a small population base and my evaluation could be viewed as being somewhat subjective, but to me it was quite significant. These were the people who would be teaching my children somewhere down the line, and who should have at least as good a grip of the English language as myself, if not better!

Where does the fault lie? Perhaps it is in the school system where Phys. Ed. teachers are routinely shuffled into teaching Social Studies, English, Math etc. (subjects in which they have little or no training) for budgetary reasons. Perhaps it is in the Faculty of Education where not enough emphasis is placed on the "basics". A large part of the problem is the lack of regard for teaching as a profession. If I think back to the top students in my graduating class in 1984, they are all now in Medicine, Law, Engineering or Honours programs. In fact, NOBODY went into Education. Maybe our teachers should be doing their degrees in the Faculties of Arts or Sciences with a further diploma from the Faculty of Education where they would learn teaching methods. Perhaps we should be making the Education faculty a strict quota faculty as is already done in other professional faculties such as Law, Medicine and Dentistry. Perhaps we should be instilling a greater respect for our teachers in our kids. It is not there now.

Siobhan Muldowney
Medicine III