

Scientists aren't the judges

Mr. Ted Milner's recent letter to the *Gateway* (November 25) on ethical responsibilities of scientists misses an important point. While the individual scientist should consider the societal implications of his research from a personal point of view, it is emphatically not his function to infuse his work with moral judgments for others.

Every person has his own moral stand, and it is no surprise to anyone that everyone assumes his own opinions to be "The Truth". In contrast to science, moral systems do not lead to hypotheses which can be tested, since agreement on the meaning of the result is unlikely.

Mr. Milner claims to be especially disturbed that at a recent seminar scientists did not discuss the moral implications of development of anti-pregnancy vaccine. Moral from whose point of view? That of the pope, the average twenty-year old Canadian, or a member of a racist group? The latter two might well agree that such a vaccine is a great idea, but for very different reasons. Scientific seminars are not the context in which to examine these opinions.

While personal moral con-

siderations may be important to the individual scientist in choosing a project, his function is to explore Nature and uncover the truth however dangerous and uncomfortable it might be. Knowledge and understanding are two-edged swords. It is society, as a group of morally different individuals agreeing on certain arbitrary common values, that

must decide on the implementation of this knowledge.

To paraphrase Jacques Monod: light or darkness, the choice is ours. In principle at least, that is why we are at the University, to inform ourselves in order to make wise choices.

John C. Vederas
Assistant Professor
of Chemistry

Quite the ironic twist

The symbol for "Women Unite Take Back the Night" was drawn either by a man who knows this type of symbolism or by a



woman who does not. The two crouching girls with upraised arms make up a buffalo skull, or more generally a bull's skull.

Above it are the crescent moon and the morning star. These three things are ancient symbols on this and other continents.

The bull's skull symbolizes a different kind of strength than may have been intended by the author of the article. And under that star female virgins were sacrificed with pointed weapons, at the appropriate time of year.

Gordon Freeman
Department of Chemistry

Reagan's rule won't be so harmless

I would like to reply to Glenn Martin's response (Nov. 25) to an article I wrote concerning the direction that the U.S. is likely to take under Ronald Reagan.

I'm afraid that I don't share Mr. Martin's confidence that now that Reagan is President, he will necessarily jettison the foreign policy that he has been espousing for the past 20 years. It is certainly true, as Mr. Martin points out, that Presidents Wilson and Johnson conveniently ignored their platitudes about peace once the election was safely out of the way.

But if seemingly cool and rational men were willing to plunge headlong into war, can better be expected of Reagan, who in recent years has called for the sending of American troops to Angola and the blockading of Cuba? Reagan has openly and unabashedly promoted the principle of might makes right and thus can claim to have a mandate from the American people to police the world.

As for the Congress's power to thwart the president, it would seem that Reagan has all but got the Congress in his back pocket. The Senate is now controlled by the Republicans and if the Democrats' decline continues, they will win control of the House by 1982.

What is more important, however, is that so many right-wing Republicans who share Reagan's dangerous and reactionary views now occupy powerful committee chairmanships. "Doves" such as McGovern and Church are no longer there to moderate Reagan's policies.

Finally, despite the budget deficit and the proposed tax cut, there is scope for a major increase

Fire victims need help

Wednesday morning, fire engulfed the Ardrossan house trailer of Tim and Margaret Scapillot, who graduated in history and geography respectively this spring at the U of A.

By the time the Sherwood Park Fire Department arrived, their house trailer was gutted and they lost all their possessions.

I have arranged a temporary apartment for them and would appreciate it very much if *Gateway* readers could give them some assistance.

What they need most is furnishings for loan or keep suitable for a bedroom suite, and

any type of clothing appropriate for a 24-year-old male and female. If you wish to help, please contact me at 436-0408 after 6 p.m. Thank you.

Ken Hagerman

Ever ready

As is customary, emergency battery booster service will be available on campus for those encountering vehicle starting problems.

This service will be available when temperatures are at -23 Celsius or lower. A call to 4855 during normal working days, between the hours of 3:30 p.m. and 6 p.m., should result in assistance.

It should be noted, however, that if bookings are heavy, calls may not be honored if the service personnel are fully committed to 6 p.m.

W.F.G. Perry
Director,
Campus Security and Traffic



Aspidistra

by Alison Thomson

Lougheed and the team have really distinguished themselves during the recently completed session at the Legislature.

Provincial-federal relations have had center stage for much of the time; Lougheed's punitive oil cutbacks measures and his refusal to reject separatism as an option for this province have had a good deal of attention — and obviously they deserve it, although perhaps not quite in the way Mr. Lougheed had in mind.

Equally appalling, and much less publicized are some of the pieces of legislation dealt with in the past couple of months. Thirty-six pieces of legislation were passed during the session. Some of these are trivial; some, however, amount to no less than an outright attack on the rights of the working people of this province.

The worst in this regard is undoubtedly the health care insurance amendment, which legalizes, encourages and removed from public scrutiny extra billing by physicians. A committee of doctors was established by the Act to determine the fairness of an extra bill — and in so doing, to require any person to submit to examination by the committee, and to produce any document the committee may require.

The potential for abuse is obvious. Not only can patients refer bills to this committee; the College of Physicians and Surgeons can also. The committee, therefore, can easily become a powerful collection agency for doctors — and the Act specifically precludes appeal of the committee's decisions to a court of law.

These provisions were drawn to the attention of the minister involved by NDP leader Grant Notley, who requested that the bill be withdrawn — this was refused. The Act was passed in eleven days. It seems hardly credible that even the Tory government would be doing this sort of thing on purpose; perhaps the Honorable Minister simply didn't stop to think.

Two bills affecting labor relations and working conditions in the province were also passed in record time. These bills include provisions to: pay handicapped people less than minimum wage; require overtime only after 44 hours in a week, instead of the usual 40; require up to two years employment before an employee is entitled to a holiday; continue to allow the Cabinet to order striking workers back to work.

Very little input from labor was sought for these bills. This is in sharp contrast with the Business Corporations Act, introduced for first reading and left at that step to allow for wide ranging public debate. This reflects an interesting set of priorities when one considers the number of people apt to be affected by each.

Another labor related bill, the Health Occupations Act, removes control of health occupations from professional societies and hands it to a board which will very quickly come to be dominated by the medical profession. It has met with cries of protest from the various occupations affected, which is certainly not surprising, since in many instances it hands control over competing health care professions to the traditional medical profession.

The Public Inquiries Amendment Act, rammed through the legislature in ten days, increases immensely the "search and seize" powers of inquiry commissioners. Unless, of course, the commission needs access to the proceedings of the cabinet; these documents are specifically excepted. And here again, there seems to have been little public consultation.

The government rushed all this through at a time when they knew the media's attention would be focused on energy and separatism. It was passed at high speed, with little time for the Tories to put their brains in gear. With majorities like that, who needs closure?

in military appropriations, and Reagan has made it quite clear where the money is to come from. His promise to substantially cut down on the fraud and waste he claims are rampant in government means major reductions in public spending. Extravagances like food stamps and the Clean Air Act are likely targets, and Reagan has said that the Department of

Energy is to be abolished.

It is, of course, possible that Reagan will turn out to be a sheep in wolf's clothing. But he's a one-term president and believes the American public is in tune with his brand of militant conservatism. Why should he compromise?

Stephen Phillips
Arts I

Gremlins on the loose

A Little Advice to *Gateway's* Proofreaders
"But nothing could be only dreader...."

(*Gateway's* own personalized version, Nov.25)

My immortal verse you most thoroughly wrecked
While your proofreader must have been dreaming.
Surely "any" 's not "only", as anyone knows,
And "only" makes hash of the meaning.

Now think of the anguish you'd load on the Bard,
How you'd place him right square on the spot,
If you printed his plays, and your printer required
Lady M. to shout: "Out! you damned sot!"

And how could a poet survive in this world,
Scrape up enough cash just to eat?
If printers insisted on printing: "A nose
By some other name smells as sweet."

Take evry precaution to always bee wright,
Cross your i's and dot all you'r t's,
Print all off you're copy with verry grate cair
An tri oll yoor reeders too pleeze.

G.N. Cormack, M.D.

Objection, your honor


In response to Jiv Sisson's letter of December 2, regarding Alison Thomson's column on separatism, I object to two of his statements.

Firstly, his description of "their right to protest unpopular government policy" might be more aptly described as treason or sedition.

Secondly, it is not fair to label Alison Thomson's views as 'socialist' merely because they neither agree with you nor the Conservative party.

Russell Mathew
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