

EDITORIAL

Academics should speak

Tenure, the special privilege that universities award to deserving academics, was designed to prevent the summary dismissal of faculty members whose views did not coincide with those of the government.

One might expect, therefore, that when problems arise in the real world (ie. off-campus), the resident academics would make their research and themselves available to the public. The academics might issue warnings, suggest remedies, criticize or approve the manner in which certain matters are resolved.

With tenure, they should be able to carry out their social responsibilities without fear of repercussions. Curiously, or perhaps coincidentally, the University of Alberta faculty members who do speak are those academics whose funding is from Ottawa or private sources.

Provincially-funded faculty members are silent.

Clearly the Tories have found a way to silence their critics within the academic community.

Instead of firing the offending researcher, the provincial government controls their career by awarding (or not awarding) research grants.

Consider the Drayton Valley blowout. Large amounts of sour gas were dispersed over a wide range of provincial landscape. For a period of at least six weeks, Albertans from Edson to points east and south of Edmonton were exposed to varying levels of sulphur gas and acid precipitation. Arguments between local doctors and provincial authorities responsible for pollution control, public health, and water quality took place in the local media.

Where were the experts from the University of Alberta during all this? Members of the Engineering department publish frequently on the dispersal of pollutants from stack plumes at refineries. They have designed models for predicting the movement of the pollutants and members for determining their presence in the environment.

Cannot the models these researchers designed be used to determine sampling strategies? Is the methodology used by the provincial government adequate and properly utilized? One would assume the answer yes, based on the lack of outcry from the Engineering faculty. I suggest you read recent journals in the Cameron Library and form your own opinion.

The local life scientists, most of whom inhabit the Biological Sciences Building, were also silent. Where were the ecologists and limnologists to explain the probable fate of the excess sulphur suddenly appearing in the environment. First year students traditionally study the cycles of elements, including nitrogen, carbon, and phosphorous. A brief description of the sulphur cycle in the local press certainly would have cleared up some points of confusion.

Where were the agricultural scientists who study the soils of the province? The potentially damaging effect of acid rain and the resultant leaching of cations is well-documented in the literature.

Did anybody from the University of Alberta say anything?

If the University is to serve the public, academics must be prepared to take a stand on controversial social issues. Improper or inadequate approaches to solving these issues must be brought to the attention of the public.

More funding from private sources and a lessened dependence on the provincial government for funding academic research are necessary prerequisites to revitalize the concept of tenure.

John Algard

Meeting at high noon

On Wednesday the Students' Union is holding a general meeting.

If this doesn't excite you, consider the fact that the last time the SU had a general meeting was in 1972. At this meeting nothing was decided because it was mistakenly believed that quorum had not been reached.

Quorum for a general meeting is one twentieth of five per cent of the members of the Students' Union. All undergraduate students are members of the Students' Union.

But in 1972, the particular bunch of fools who were in charge used the total number of students-including grad students' to calculate quorum. Actually quorum did exist at the 1972 meeting but nobody knew about it until later.

This year the number of SU members has been carefully calculated and quorum will be 1204.

At precisely noon on Wednesday, the doors of the Butterdome will be opened. At 12:30, the number of people who have passed through the exit turnstiles will be subtracted from the number of students who came through the entrance turnstiles. If this number is 1204 or greater, a vote will be held on whether to hold a second CFS referendum.

If the motion succeeds at the general meeting, a new referendum on becoming full members of the Canadian Federation of Students will be held on March 30.

I realize most people reading this do not really care about CFS-I certainly don't-but isn't the thought of some direct democracy even a little bit thrilling?

Why not head down to the Butterdome Wednesday noon and see what develops?

Alberta

GOVERNMENT OF ALBERTA

Joe Student
123 University Street
Edmonton, Alberta
March 1, 1984

Dear Joe:

Your 1979-1980 Alberta Student Loan application has been rejected.

Tough noogies bozo!

Love and kisses
Students' Finance Board
XOXOXOXO.

P.S. You can appeal our decision at our next scheduled Appeal Board meeting in early 1987.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Library agrees

Re: Editorial: Libraries Crunched

Mr. Bouchard states that in 1970-71 the U of A library was 4th among all members of the Association of Academic and Research Libraries (ARL) in materials acquisitions and that we were separated from the top (Harvard) by \$700,000. This is correct; however, the information for 1980-81 needs clarification. The editorial states that the University of Alberta was 7th in materials acquisitions. We were in fact in group seven, among the 10 groups of the 101 reporting ARL members. We were actually 26th in materials acquisitions - a drop of 22 positions since 1970-71. The difference of \$4,300,000 between Alberta and the top (Harvard) is correct.

The 1982-83 information has just become available. Our position in materials acquisitions has now dropped to 29th out of 104 reporting ARL members. The dollar differential between Alberta and the top (still Harvard) is \$3.6 million.

The ARL Library Index, which is derived through a variant of factor analysis, produces a 1982-83 range of 3.08 to -1.50. Harvard and Rice are at the extremes, i.e. 1st and 104th. The Alberta index is .51 which equates to the 29th position.

The Library appreciates the editorial support of the Gateway and offers these additional statistics for readers' information.

Rod Banks
Head, Administrative Services
University Library

Professors plead poverty

You recently published a brief article with an impressive heading suggesting that professors at the University of Alberta are very well paid indeed. You and your readers might be interested in the following facts:

According to data recently published by CAUT, real salaries during the period 1977 to 1982 declined by an average of 10.3 per cent amongst university teachers in Canada.

In constant terms, the mean salary for all age levels in the professoriate increased by an average of 45.5 per cent whilst the cost of living rose by 62.2 per cent.

The demography of the university community was not static during this five year period. Universities experienced a slowdown in growth, replacing and hiring fewer teachers than earlier. As a result, the median age of faculty in Canada changed from 40.7 years in 76-77 to 44 years in 81-82.

The age group showing the greatest increase in number in the five year period is the 40-44 year group. This group also experienced the highest decline in purchasing power. Thus, five more years of age and experience are not rewarded by a higher real salary. The bulk of university teachers find that not only are they earning less than their counterparts five years earlier, but are taking home less than they themselves earned five years earlier.

In addition, you might want to ponder the principles of fair and comparative payment. Fairness requires that one asks pertinent questions about years of training, necessary talent, and the social importance of the job performed. Comparative merit must be related to facts about other groups in Alberta. The unemployed, and most students, are obviously in worse financial straits, but hardly examples to be emulated. There are, apparently, many other groups whose relative economic position has not been weakened; one may look for instance into salary settlements for beer bottle handlers, plumbers, electricians, lawyers and physicians, and bankers and politicians.

Have all of them invested more time and money into their education? Are they all performing functions more difficult and deserving greater rewards than those given to teachers and researchers?

It is the natural role of a student newspaper to be wary about all sacred cows, including those with tenure. It is less clear why the Gateway should tacitly make its own political and ideological prejudicial to one of the more intellectual groups in society.

Should you wish to publish this text, I should suggest the following title: Are Professors So Well Paid After All?

H.V. Dimic
Comparative Literature

gateway
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It's convention time in Trois Rivieres and the Gilbertologists have trained hockey players for evening entertainment. Bernie Poitras and Brenda Mallaly are in charge of boring speeches. Meanwhile, Jim Moore and Shane Berg are in charge of dirty films for those who have enough brains not to get sucked into listening to boring speeches. Anna Borowiecki, Christina Starr, Bill St. John, Bonnie Zimmerman, Zane Harker, Dan Watson, and Jordan Peterson were all smarts enough to watch the films. Neal Watson and Kent Cochrane on the other hand, both Oded on Nodzo halfway through the third speaker. Lord Algard wasn't amused.

Staff this issue