

# The Gateway

Member of the Canadian University Press

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## Students "Erroneously" Fooled

Students' Council has given approval to the proposed new Students' Union Building—and this includes approval for the proposed "inter-faith meditation room," as the councillors have chosen to call it. (It has also been referred to as "chapel.")

In itself, the approval was a high point of progress. But in spite of the smoothness with which the SUB Expansion proposal has been presented and considered this week, there were, in the words of a student critic at Monday's general meeting, "a few ripples beneath the surface."

One such "ripple" is radiating from the proposed meditation room or chapel. The fact at issue is that the student body has been misinformed about the financial aspects of the room.

The meditation room first became an issue when, on Nov. 15, we published an editorial "Do We Want A Chapel?"—indicating that student money could not be used to finance such a room.

Next, The Gateway published a letter to the editor from Dixon Thompson, the chapel convener for the Students' Union planning commission for the new SUB. In part, Mr. Thompson's letter stated the following:

*"I agree with your editorial of Nov. 15, that Students' Union funds should not be used to finance, even in part, the proposed chapel in the new Students' Union Building. I would like to make it known, to you, and the student body, that the chapel will not be built unless it can be entirely financed by non-Students' Union sources."*

## Still In The Dark

As we said above, the proposal for the new Students' Union Building has progressed to the high point of receiving approval in principle from the Students' Council.

After approval was given Tuesday night, various persons stated how wonderful it was that the expansion project had proceeded thus far with criticisms being directed all the way at the project and at its handling.

It was stated by the council president that criticism was valuable in that it would make the expansion committee and all others concerned more keen on doing their job well.

Indeed, the various committee members must be applauded for giving up social life, other activities, and—in some cases—sleep for what they thought was the betterment of student life at U of A.

But the SUB Expansion committee erred badly in not making available to the student body financial facts and figures regarding the proposed building before Monday's general meeting on SUB Expansion.

As a last resort, the committee was to have submitted financial statistics and forecasts to The Gateway for today's edition. They failed, and thous-

With some misgivings, we accepted Mr. Dixon's statement and reconciled ourselves to the fact that there would be a chapel in the new SUB—but only, of course, on the basis that Students' Union funds would not be used to finance the room.

The students who read Mr. Thompson's letter were also led to believe that this was the case.

Now, however, the facts are that this is no longer the case.

At Tuesday's meeting the council, with only one dissenting vote, passed a motion "that an inter-faith meditation room be provided in (the new Students' Union Building) to be paid for either by donations, or by general funds, or by a combination of both."

The latter part of the motion is worth repeating: "... to be paid for either by donations, or by general funds, or by a combination of both."

It appears, then, that Mr. Thompson's statement was erroneous.

Prior to the motion being passed, there was considerable discussion of the issue. In the course of debate, The Gateway editor quoted from Mr. Thompson's letter and suggested that the students were being misinformed if the council did not confine its actions within the policy statement made by Mr. Thompson.

We submit that it is no argument to say that various councillors' feelings on the matter were alluded to at Monday's open, general meeting. The rebuttal here, if necessary, is that council and the SUB Expansion committee led the students to believe that the chapel (or, now, meditation room) would be built only with non-Students' Union funds.

ands of students are still in the dark about new SUB finances.

Council President Wes Cragg, defending the stand which would include the meditation room motion, pointed out that Mr. Thompson may have made the statement "erroneously." Perhaps there was an error on Mr. Thompson's part.

But would it not be difficult to make such an error in policy statement considering the facts that Mr. Thompson was chapel convener and that he likely considered his statements carefully before putting them down on paper for publication? And could not Mr. Cragg have corrected the "error" ahead of the two meetings this week?

Quite possibly, the president was not made aware that the chapel convener had made an "error." This, however, is not relevant to the resulting situation.

The facts are that the student body has been misinformed. We must conclude that the council should not go ahead with the meditation room unless it is built with donated funds or, secondly, the council obtains general student approval by way of a separate meeting.

I COST 4.5 MILLION DOLLARS  
I AM 55.62 % SELF LIQUIDATING  
I AM HUGE  
I AM UGLY  
I AM HORIZONTALLY SATISFYING  
WHAT AM I ?



## Spectrum

By Doug McTavish  
Secretary-Treasurer

Students' Council, at its meeting of Dec. 3, approved a principle—I wish here to offer what I hope is a dissenting and responsible view of that principle. The question is this: Should the funds of the Students' Union be used to support the establishment of a chapel (or meditation room) in the new Students' Union Building? Personally, I am in favor of a chapel—if it can be provided by donation. I do not believe that the students at large should be required to support a religious institution. This belief arises from the following considerations:

### Design

A great deal has been made of the "inter-faith" nature of the chapel. Fundamentally, this seems to contradict the very nature of the facility. Surely religious belief arises from CONVICTION; and yet, we talk about designing a NEUTRAL chapel. Either the chapel expresses religious feeling or it doesn't. If it does express religious feelings, then the feelings of a significant body of students are being ignored. If it doesn't express religious feeling, then it simply duplicates any number of other conference and meeting rooms.

### Purpose

One of the most remarkable contributions of the very active religious organizations on our campus has been their additions to the intellectual environment. Their major emphasis has been, and will continue to be, an emphasis on religious DEBATE, rather than religious WORSHIP. This is their contribution—the continuing and active discussion of theological questions. Religious worship, it seems to this author, is a highly personal matter and one which should not be legislated by government. I am most interested in the continuing debates of the outstanding nature which we see thus far in our religious organizations. I do not believe, however, that the

individual student should be compelled to support the principle of religious worship—this is a personal decision, and not justly assumed by Students' Council.

### Principle

There are some areas where minority rights really do not matter. For instance, the "rights" of those people who do not use recreational facilities do not seem to be particularly significant. It does not seem to be a "major" issue. Since a fair percentage of the populace of the campus would probably be interested in using recreational facilities, then their inclusion is justified. However, there are some areas, notably religious worship, where the principle of minority rights seems to be most important.

There are substantial numbers of agnostics, atheists, Zen Buddhists, Hindus and so on on our campus. On a matter of principle, which this writer regards as exceptionally important, it seems to be a travesty of government for religious facilities (and therefore, religious worship) to be legislated. Further, I do not believe that it is possible to construct a truly "inter-faith" chapel, to include all possible varieties of organized worship. The very term "chapel" and the inclusion of an organ presupposes at least a Christian atmosphere. Clearly, the minority rights may be in some sense slighted in this instance.

Finally, I believe that it would be of most value to the campus to conduct a fund drive for the chapel, to create interest and enthusiasm in that facility. This is somewhat more admirable than the relatively easy way out of financing a chapel from general student funds. Those who wish the facility should pay for it.

This writer, then, has stated his opinion. It is a minority opinion, and I wish to say that council has made its decision, democracy has been served and that I propose to support that decision.