

EDITORIAL

News goes soft

Newspaper journalism has changed considerably in Canada in recent years with the two major chains, Thomson and Southam, gaining control of two-thirds of the English-language dailies.

"No one who has been close to newspapers can doubt that the power exercised by a chain in shaping the editorial content of its newspapers is pervasive. Head office appoints the publishers, who appoint everyone else. They control budgets and, in some cases, control expenditures in fine detail. They operate with a string of interchangeable publishers and understood administrative norms," says the Kent Royal Commission on Newspapers.

Along with this trend towards chain operations comes a discernible trend towards soft news in Canadian newspapers.

Supposedly, this soft news movement is in response to readers' interests.

"The newspaper incapable of responding to its audience is one step from oblivion and the newspaper editor who ignores his readers does so at personal peril," said Edmonton Journal Editor Stephen Hume, in his Saturday column.

The Journal's new look includes "exploring contemporary fashion" in Edmonton and in the Great Abroad.

Instead of budgeting for investigative reports, the movement is towards more fluff: Last week, one front page of the city section was devoted to a "massive investigation" on who serves the best french fries in town.

The newspaper must serve its readers and it must never pander to them, says Hume. Indeed, Journal readers can now sleep better knowing that it takes half an hour to get an order of fries at Bones. In fairness, the Journal is still much better than the Sun, but the gap between the two could hardly be said to be widening.

In contrast, a paper like the Globe and Mail sees for itself a more exalted role in Canadian society. The Globe carries more political, economic, and world news than what would be considered average.

Obviously, some newspapers feel that its readers are more intelligent than the infamous Grade Eight standard.

A couple questions from Walter Stewart's *The Inside Story* come to mind:

"1) Whether more readers wouldn't opt for a better view of the world if they were offered the choice; and

2) Whether newspapers and other media should not, on their own, carry more news of the world as a responsibility to the undoubted minority which does want to know what is going on in the world."

Since so many papers answer the second question with an emphatic "no," we may never find the answer to the first question.

Brent Jang

Give us a try

As I walked into the Gateway office, our esteemed future editor (Brent Jang) accosted me to write an editorial. At first I replied I was not rabid at any particular subject to write a full editorial. So I convinced him to accept a minitorial, preferably from someone else.

But then, through the inspiration of the anti-God King, I saw the light. You may recall the phenomenon of the last SU election called the *Utopian Pragmatists*. How (you may ask) did I discover this lunatic fringe of politicians who are so anti-political? — through my involvement with the Gateway.

UP gave new meaning to my decadent desolate lifestyle. Before I joined Gateway I was but a crew member on the *Flying Dutchman* wandering the high seas of education. I would have been content (who says ignorance isn't bliss) until a friend dragged me into the student newspaper office of the U of A. It was his/her intention (allow me to hide the identity of the Nazi-sympathizing culprit) to join, and I went along for the ride. The then-news editor (as opposed to the new, hip or hep-news editor) lured me into a conversation, and actually enraptured me with news writing. The rest is history.

A point to make is: If you enjoy writing, the Gateway can provide an opportunity to practice and utilize those skills. I enjoy writing. I was not very good at it at first, but I have improved and I will continue. The only way I improved was by honing my skills through constant writing.

Opportunities exist through the Gateway. Try us.

Wesley Oginski

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF - Andrew Watts
 NEWS EDITORS - Allison Annesley, Richard Watts
 MANAGING EDITOR - Jens Andersen
 ARTS EDITOR - David Cox
 SPORTS EDITOR - Brent Jang
 PHOTO EDITOR - Ray Giguere
 CUP EDITOR - Wes Oginski
 PRODUCTION - Anne Stephen, Jim Miller
 ADVERTISING - Tom Wright
 MEDIA SUPERVISOR - Margaret Tilroe-West
 CIRCULATION - Gunnar Blodgett

Staff this issue:

G is for goodness, we have in our hearts, A is for amphetamines, for systemic quick starts; T is for tenderness, we have in our loins; E is for energy, we expend on conjoins; W is for whiskey, the journalist's delight; A is for abstinence, when things are not right; and Y - because we love you! Thank you, Mickey! And today's club members are intrepid Margaret Baer; insistent Sandy Yickers; irascible Martin Beales; illuminating Bill Ingles; flashy Paula Maughim; happy Zane Harker; brassy Pierre Mancke; magnanimous Mark Roppel; cuddly Ken Lenz; blue-eyed Kent Blinston; jolly Jim Gerwing; magic Martin Coutts; irrepressible Jeanine McDade; natty Nate LaRoi; tantalizing Tom Hayward; gorgeous Gilbert Bouchard; heavenly Heather-Ann Laird; and the late great John Quincy Algard.

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LAUDITORIAL

The start of each year here is usually kicked off by a group of people being tossed into a room and being told to put out the Gateway. What makes this situation a little worse is the fact these people don't really know one another. Fortunately, we did not have to deal quite as much with this added strain as in previous years. For the most part, we all knew each other fairly well. This had its drawbacks, however, as the saying goes: familiarity breeds contempt. In our case I wouldn't say it was contempt as much as it was the fact that, because we were familiar with each other we weren't afraid to let one another 'have it' in an argument. Equally important, though, we were able to bury our differences quite quickly.

After the first two or three 22 hour press days we all began to question our decisions to 'get involved.' Thoughts of the quiet existence of the average, normal student were abundant. I think that now, however, we would all agree that we made the right decision, even though this year has not been all peaches and cream.

A year as editor — any editor can knock the stuffing out of you. It can also give you something extremely valuable for later years. Experience.

Certainly this year has been an experience for all of us. It has been good, bad, prideful and humbling. The staff was by no means harmonious all the time. But the grumblings of late September which exploded into full grown gripes by mid to late October were not a signal of a staff falling apart but of one coming together.

It was my opinion then, as it is now, if we could survive those problems, keep from killing one another and still pull together twice a week to put out the paper, we had a good, committed group of people.

One of the reasons for the loud, high spirited staff was the strong sense of individualism and equally strong personalities on staff this year. Both were encouraged to flourish by everybody. At times I deeply regretted this encouragement for it produced some real tensions but the benefits far outweighed any regrets I had.

Witness the fact that our volunteer staff went up by almost 50 per cent over last year. New people coming in were openly welcomed and quickly indoctrinated in the occasional vociferous staff meeting. Some fled in horror and never came back but most stayed and they will be the ones who will make the Gateway next year.

Also note the increased volume of letters coming across the managing editor's desk this year. If one of our mandates is to provoke student thought then we succeeded in this regard.

We produced a 28 page paper this year to equal the largest of last year and we bettered that by putting out the first 32 page paper. Incidentally, our 32 page 75th anniversary edition was the finest Gateway I've ever seen; the issue I have the most pride in.

In addition, a lot of what we did was based on something I always tried to maintain: to put out the Gateway but to have some fun at the same time. Consequently, there was a lot more light reading than in previous years.

Above all, however, the staff has not been afraid to experiment. Our HUB ad feature may have set a dangerous precedent but we'd all agree that we learnt something. Our rather bizarre use of colours in the centre spread and on the flag met with mixed reviews but it was different. This was the first year the Faculte has been allowed a voice in the paper on a regular basis. Our use of varied and large pictures on the front page continually made the paper visually attractive. We were never afraid to try new things. We made a lot of mistakes and we pissed a lot of people 'right off' but we are a student newspaper. We are not professionals. We are here to learn.

In all, we've learnt a great deal. I personally have learnt a lot basically because of the people with which I've worked. For good or bad, here's my last chance to print my views on this year's Gateway staff:

Allison Annesley - It's been an up and down year for Allison. Her enthusiasm at the start of the year has waned slightly and she's never quite cured the annoying habit of 'disappearing' in the middle of a press day but her all around contribution has been effective. She brought a different and fresh perspective to the paper which counteracted the often too cynical perspective of others. Her ability to listen and her genuine care and consideration were two things I greatly appreciated. I don't know if Allison will ever go into journalism in a big way, but what ever organization she joins will be the better for her participation.

Richard Watts - It was interesting working so closely with my brother. I don't believe I'd leap gleefully at the chance again. I found that as a brother, Richard was and is too much of a friend but as a friend he's too much of a big brother. He continually frustrated me with his practice of getting up late on press days but I don't think the paper would have functioned properly without his input. He proved to be the best writer (when he got his tail in gear) on staff. He did as much, if not more, than anyone in keeping new people on staff. His sense of humour was something I could relate to and his cynicism was something I could compare my own ideas against. When he learns that normal office hours begin at 9 a.m. the world of journalism will never be the same.

Jens Andersen - Jens was continually upset at our inability to get the little things down pat. But for a man who continually missed deadlines and is famous for writing the shortest story of a robbery attempt in the history of journalism, I felt that his perspective could have been broader. His wit and attitude were enjoyable to the extreme but it was his almost child-like devilishness which constantly amazed me. Jens loves to provoke people and quietly snigger while they froth. He is fortunate in that people will constantly rise to the bait he waves at them. Jens knows this and will constantly and gleefully wave on.

Dave Cox - I think Dave was too political for an arts editor and but for the votes of a few he may have achieved proper status. Dave felt slightly alienated from the rest of us at the beginning but his intelligence and perseverance pulled him and the arts section through. Once the bitching stopped his section improved at an alarming rate. The writing he and his contributors produced was up to an excellent standard always and his presence on staff perhaps did more to alter the right wing leanings of his editor than anything else. There's a place for David in any organization, and any bar.

Brent Jang - This guy was probably the most quiet, yet, listened to man on staff. His sports section made me envious. His commitment was something everyone could latch onto. Brent carries on the tradition of sports to editor-in-chief position started last year. As chief editorial officer Brent will do well. He will, however, have to temper his over eagerness with a little perspective but that will be no problem and the Gateway will improve under him. I look forward to his interpretation.

Wes Oginski - As much as I detest CUP I like Wes. He always tried to inject new ideas and his perspective was valuable. His duties were curtailed somewhat by an impatient and zealous news team but he handled his position well. I don't have as much faith in the co-operative as does Wes but his year as CUP editor and his one man organization of the regional conference benefitted the paper immensely.

Jim Miller - One half of the production team. I knew Jim was talented in design but his biggest asset was his sense of humour and his attitude towards the paper and people. His absences while teaching were an inconvenience at times but they only proved how valuable Jim was to the paper. He helped me keep my perspective on many issues. His patented "Miller wit" always contained a point I never failed to receive. His advice and example proved invaluable to everyone. I know Jim will create something better wherever he goes.

Anne Stephen - The other half of the production team and our resident ardent feminist. Anne's perspective kept us in check a few times for which I am deeply grateful. She did her job well enough but for her sporadic health but it was Anne's ability to stand up and be heard that was and is her biggest asset. A little off the wall at times, a tad too loud at other times but always well meant and well taken. She'll make an interesting psychologist.

Ray Giguere - The Gateway bids goodbye to Ray after two and a half years. His photos, efficiency and rather 'unique' style in the office were a wonder to behold. Ray let his right wing philosophies run away with him a little this year but once you know Ray there were few problems. Ray was someone I could bitch to without being shot down in flames. Believe me, at various times this year that was important. One day, Ray is going to share a bottle of expensive cognac with me and by that time we'll both be able to afford it.

Gunnar Blodgett - The Ted Baxter of our news room. An interesting character study.

That was the editorial staff but there are more people who must be mentioned: Tom Wright and Margaret Tilroe-West sold our ads and kept us in line when our eyes blazed with thoughts of colour front page pics. The Gateway is indeed fortunate.

A special mention goes to Heather-Anne Laird who put up with us all year and was someone we could always count on. I don't know how Heather accomplished it but I am damn glad she did.

Many thanks to: Kent Blinston for his irreverence and for maintaining (re-establishing?) the tradition of at least a threat of a lawsuit per year; John Roggeveen for his constant screaming; the cartoonists of Mike Skeet (Baz), Gerard Kennedy (Pasken), Sarah Hickson (Sarah), Igor Gavanski. **People to watch out for:** Ken (the angry young man) Lenz, Mark (what are you disgusted with today?) Roppel, Gilbert (don't you ever sleep?) Bouchard, Cathy McLaughlin, Jack Verme, Zane Harker, Martin Beales, Martin Coutts, Sandy Vickerson, George. If I have missed anyone please accept my sincere apologies. Many people make the Gateway and it has been a joy and a privilege to work with them all. The past year and a half has taught me so much more than I was able to give back. I shall miss it immensely.

Andrew Watts

N.B. of special note: This year has been very trying at times and there is a small list of people who, though probably don't know it, have held me together and gotten me through it: Richard, Jim, Barb and Lise - my deepest thanks.

Andrew