"Anti-West" Rhetoric

The habit of exploiting regional disparities to avoid tough questions is alarmingly becoming the norm for Canadian politicians.

Is it any wonder why the public has become increasingly skeptical with today's politicians when they resort to pitting one region against another?

Last week Auditor General Kenneth Dye presented his annual report on the federal government's fiscal management: when management failings were questioned in the House, it prompted a display of partisan politics of the worst kind.

Dye had reported that 5 million federal government dollars had gone into the construction of the West Edmonton Mall even though the project did not meet the government's requirements for financial assistance.

When the opposition parties asked legitimate questions concerning the spending of these public funds, the Tories hurled accusations that the Opposition were "anti-Western Canada" instead of dealing with the issue.

Liberal MP Brian Tobin asked why the Deputy Prime Minister had okayed the grant when it was obvious "it did not contribute to the financial viability of the mall" because "the payment was received long after the mall was completed and operating." Don Mazankowski replied: "I'm not surprised that the previous government would reject any support for western Canada."

This answer set the tone for the rest of the week. When Liberal MP John Nunziata wanted to know "what social or economic benefit did Canadians derive as the result of a 5 million dollar gift to a corporation that has 6 billion dollars in assets", Mazankowski responded with "We know the position of the Liberal Party. It has traditionally been against Western Canada for a long time."

So much for reasoned arguments.

NDP Bill Blaikie, MP from Winnipeg, said Mazankowski was dodging the question and playing on regional discontent. "Is he saying that people who want to do things for Western Canada are above the law. People like the DPM who want to do things for Western Canada can do anything they like as long as they can stand up and justify it on the basis of their regional loyalties. Surely western Canadians are interested in honesty and fairness in government as much as anybody else and I ask the DPM to say why he thought he was above the law and funded a project that was ineligible for funding."

"The initiative... is a very important tourist attraction. It is one of the most significant job creating activities in Western Canada. It is an important diversification of (tourism) and it was on this basis that the project was funded."

Again the question was avoided, but I guess we can guess the answer.

NDP Lorne Nystrom wanted to know how they could "make this grant to the buddies of (Mazankowski) for Fantasyland in Edmonton."

Robert de Cotret, Minister of Regional and Industrial Expansion, defended Mazankowski by replying "What do you have against Western Canada? What do you have against Alberta? Why are you haggling on this point?"

These are interesting questions coming from the same Minister who gave the CF-18 maintenance contract to a Quebec company instead of the Winnipeg firm which had tendered a lower bid.

NDP Bill Blaikie pressed again. "What kind of message is the PM sending when one of his senior ministers breaks the rules in order to give 5 million dollars to a couple of gazillionaires who need the money like they need a hole in the head."

If one was hoping that a cooler head would prevail in the Prime Minister's response, guess again. Mulroney responded with the same bombastic, partisan drivel previously set by his cabinet ministers.

"Why is the NDP so desperately concerned to raise matters that damage Western Canada... Now I know my honourable friends in the Liberals and the NDP are opposed to the interests of Western Canada, and it becomes clearer every day."

Mulroney quoted in his book, *Where I Stand*, something Felix-Antoine Savard had once written. "Heureux les hommes et les peuples raccontes" — Happy are men and people when united. He went on to write "that is my hope for all and my most profound desire for our country." So where is that leader that promised to "create a new accord between all Canadians based on understanding and mutual respect.?"

Instead we have a Prime Minister who not only doesn't discourage his minister from playing on regional discontent, but actually leads the way.

Western Canadians neither need, nor want this kind of defence. The Mulroney government can kindly stop using the West as a pawn every time it wishes to score political points. It's neither fair, nor in the best interest of the West, to pit the regions against each other. It's obvious that the Tories are using Western discontent to help bolster their sagging popularity in the polls by tossing off more "anti-West" rhetoric. It's time to ditch the propaganda, and restore some integrity to the House of Commons.

Juanita Spears

Be afraid. Be very afraid.

Cartoon appreciated

(Re: The SU Council fuss over Colin Green's political cartoon)

When I first saw the cartoon, I had considered writing a letter to the editor, congratulating the paper for not being afraid to print what some people would no doubt consider to be unprintable. I would have also explained how if Bill C-54 were to be passed, it could conceivably make it illegal to own a copy of, let alone print the cartoon, just because of humourless people looking at the literal content and ignoring the symbolic content, crying "Bestiality! Bestiality!" However, I figured the printing of a cartoon wasn't such a big deal to warrant my writing a letter, so I didn't. But a week later, a story appeared in the *Gateway* about how our Students' Union made for one of the most ridiculous wastes of council time by actually debating whether the *Gateway* should be made to apologize for the printing of the cartoon. Well! I'm writing a letter now, but now I have fuel for my fire.

It makes sense that David Tupper, the sponsor of the motion to ask the *Gateway* for an apology, didn't at first even understand the cartoon. What's so hard to understand? There's Uncle Sam (the U.S.), a beaver (Canada), and a bunch of barrels labeled such that they represent the many issues that have made Canada/U.S. relations difficult. I'm afraid that for some people, the message is lost as they are too busy being offended and keep focusing their attention on the fact that a man and a beaver are "doing it," and as a result, miss the rather clever visual puns "held over a barrel on free trade" and "yet again the U.S. screws Canada" (note the other barrels which were no doubt used earlier, labelled "acid rain," "arctic sovereignty," etc.). Let me give you something to think about: if Uncle Sam was strangling the beaver instead, would the same fuss be raised? I think not — people don't seem to give a damn about depictions of VIOLENT DEATH, only about depictions of sex. Personally, that fact of what constitutes bad taste in this society makes me sick.

To look at the cartoon and cry, "Bestiality!" is ludicrous. If Canada's popular symbol was also an old man, or even a watermelon, that's what would be lying in the beaver's place. I imagine the same people would cry, "Homosexuality!" or "Masturbation!" or some damn thing, demonstrating a kneejerk prudish response that shows a poor sense of humour. To those of you who were shocked by the cartoon: I hope you were shocked damned good — perhaps you'll grow from the experience and learn to be more tolerant of things that upset you, things that really and truly don't warrant the fuss you raised. Please — keep an open mind and a sense of humour — you'll find that less things will upset you.

I'm upset that some Students' Council members would want to give the *Gateway* editorial "guidance." If you "guide" a paper to not print something in the way the paper would have printed it, you are in control. You are practicing censorship, if not censorship of opinion, then of the mode of expression of that opinion. I'm sick of people getting offended by things and deciding that no one else should see the "offensive" material.

To the *Gateway* editors: Please, don't apologize to me for allowing me to see the cartoon. I am thanking you for giving me the credit that I had the openness of mind and sense of humour to appreciate what the cartoon had to offer. It was daring, original, and funny as hell. So there.

Ron Talonde

Darryn Roy please contact Sherri at *The Gateway*. Rm. 282 SUB or 432-5168

El Salvador facts

Thank you for your coverage of the important visit of 2 reps from the University of El Salvador.

However, it is essential that the facts are straight. You should know that the Sandinistas(note spelling), which were liberally mentioned in the same breath as the 'death squads', are far from being a rebel force, and are entirely unconnected with El Salvador.

The Sandinistas are in fact the legitimately elected government of Nicaragua, who have implemented an admirable number of reforms since their victory over the dictator Somoza in 1979. Despite the bull-headed attempts of the U.S. government to thwart them, they continue to strive for peace, with a deep-rooted popular support.

The Death Squads are a vicious tool of the military in El Salvador, waging a campaign of terror against the Salvadoran people, as evidence recently by the assassination of the head of the Human Rights Commission in San Salvador. On the same day a member of the National University was also murdered.

Of course, there is not nearly enough media coverage of the atrocities committed against the civilian population in El Salvador. If people could only know what barbarous regimes our governments are condoning, and the U.S. is positively supporting, it would not be allowed to continue.

F.M. Hanley

Tory propaganda

The October 20th edition of *The Gateway* was the first edition of your newspaper I have had the opportunity to read. Contrary to the enlightened and intellectual student viewpoint I had hoped to find, this issue provided little more than a rehash of big business ideology and an advocation of the Tory status quo. What a disappointment!

Society advances as the youth of

Letters to the Editor are encouraged and always welcome.

If you have a comment which would be of interest to the students of the University, please do not hesitate to send it in. All we require is your name, address, and phone number, and student ID if you are a student. We will not print letters missing any of these.

Letters should be no longer than three hundred words.

Mail or deliver you letters to Room 282 SUB, or drop them at any SU information booth.