

(letters from pp. 4,5)

"For the third time this year, Mr. Gillese, I feel compelled to set the record straight on a matter reported in the Gateway. I refer to your March 17 and March 24 editorials in which you criticize me for opposing the Feb. 24 picket in front of the Legislature

In your March 17 editorial you quote me as saying that we must be "reasonable" in opposing the Government on the issue of differential fees for foreign students and that we must attempt to "negotiate our position." You say that I opposed the picket because I didn't want to "antagonize a Government which already has a low opinion of students." You then question the personal motives of myself and those who supported me for taking this stand and suggested that we lack "guts."

I take strong exception to these charges. Mr. Gillese, if you had been at the Feb. 22 meeting of Council or even if you had bothered to read the minutes or talk to me afterwards you would have known that I never once used the words "reasonable" or "negotiate" and that the Government's reaction to the picket was by no means the central thrust of my discussion. **Ed. Note:** I relied on reporters' notes.

What took place at that meeting was a disagreement over "means" not "ends." I took great pains to point out that I was not implying that we should take a "soft" stand in opposing the Government. The Government is blatantly wrong in proposing differential fees and that's all there is to it. We must strive to make sure that this unjustified proposal is never implemented. But we must also use our heads in formulating our opposition.

I opposed the picket simply on the grounds that it would alienate the public support that we so vitally need on this issue. If I had thought that the picket would help rather than hinder our cause, I would have enthusiastically attended.

But this is a very emotional issue and one does not fight emotion with emotion which is what a demonstration (particularly this one) is an expression of. One must use facts and strong, coherent arguments to oppose the Government's fallacies. The Government has not responded itself to our facts, which were constructively and rationally presented to them, so now we must turn to a group which they can't afford to ignore, the voters of Alberta.

Pickets and slogans do not get across the facts which quickly change people's minds on this issue. At best, they conjure up all the stigmas traditionally attached to this outmoded style of student activism.

Whether we like it or not, Mr. Gillese, we are living in a fairly conserving (sic) society and we must be careful in how we approach certain matters if we are truly serious about winning issues. That conviction is not a show of weakness, it's just practical common sense.

Many of my friends attended the picket and I know them to be rationale, (sic) committed individuals. Unfortunately, the public often does not recognize that fact when they read newspaper accounts referring to "belligerent crowds" and we delude (sic) ourselves in thinking otherwise. Their reaction is all too often a very stereotyped one. Any Government which responds to such duress would only appear weak in the eyes of

its electorate. More importantly, the small number of students that attended the picket (about 100) misrepresents the support that we have on campus for this issue. This poor turn-out in itself should clearly show you that this campus does not support the use of this sort of tactic.

I feel that pickets and demonstrations simply placate the consciences of those who are not willing to do the truly difficult things that win issues. I refer to face-to-face discussions and debate of an informal and formal nature with individuals and groups both on campus and in the community, as well as factual media accounts and distributions of literature. I think it takes courage to tell a person or group of people whom you respect that they are narrow-minded and wrong on this issue, but then I guess that doesn't fit into your definition of guts.

You yourself refer to the fact that many community groups have expressed their support for this issue. I wonder if you have bothered to ask yourself what group of people on campus encouraged such support long before the Equal Access Committee (which organized the picket) was ever heard of. A truthful answer to this question may require you to reconsider your statement in the March 24 editorial that only the Committee (which organized the picket) has been working on this issue and therefore only they should comment on how it should be handled. **Ed. Note:** Re-read the editorial. No such statement was made.

More importantly, the Committee was given finances with the understanding that it was to constitute a "Task Force" of the Students' Union. They were

charged with the task of distributing information on this issue. The control of their actions and how they utilized the money allocated to them constitutionally rests with the elected representatives of the Students' Union. If not, those representatives would be reneging their responsibility to comment on the effectiveness of all Students' Union policy whether they have been directly involved in its formulation or not. At least that's the approach that's been encouraged with regard to Academic policy and other issues this year, and rightly so.

At any rate, the proof is in the pudding. Since the picket, at least two organizations which we had been talking to, contacted us expressing their leanness (sic) to commit themselves publicly on this issue. Each of them cited the media accounts of the picket as being at least partly responsible for their hesitation. I can't understand that attitude any more than you can, but it's a fact. I guess many people just don't like to be identified with what they take to be "extremist" activities even if the intent of the people involved is a laudible (sic) one. We have to be very careful in rallying opposition against a Government which is so firmly entrenched in office. The planned demonstration on April 4 will only worsen the situation. **Ed. Note:** Which two organizations?

I also wish to state in the strongest terms possible that I and the people who supported me take great offense in having our motivations for speaking out on this issue questioned. I am greatly disappointed that you have chosen to question our right to speak our minds. I would hope that you are capable of respecting another's opinion without necessarily agreeing with it.

Your suggestion that the only reason that we took this stand is because of our concern for future career opportunities is, at best, a "cheap shot." I have heard no practical arguments from you or anyone else to suggest that I was wrong in my stand so I can only assume that you have chosen to question my motives in the hope of saving face for yourself and the group you seem determined to protect.

In passing, Mr. Gillese, I might say that I have heard it mentioned on campus that the only reason that certain Gateway staffers and certain members of the Equal Access Committee are opposing the Government on this issue is not because they feel any commitment to foreign students, but because they simply wish to oppose in the most publicized manner possible a government which is not far enough left on the political spectrum for their tastes. In other words, their philosophical beliefs are clouding their effectiveness on this issue. Of course, both of us know that doubting the motivations of these people in this manner is ludicrous and unfair. Don't we?

Nonetheless, this whole discussion is counter-productive. In the time it took you to write those two editorials and me to write this letter, we could have convinced a dozen more people that the Government is talking through its hat. Furthermore, I think students are becoming a bit perturbed about the "holier than thou" confrontations that appear on these pages. It projects an image of disunity on this issue, which is far from the truth, except in the minds of some.

Ken McFarlane
Vice-President, Academic
Students' Union

...Editor wrong

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