

Decline of the creative artist?

The Editor,

If anyone can show me a more disturbing factor of university life than the decline of the toilet arts, I will eat the sports section of this paper. Ever since my first year on campus, I have been a fan of the great philosophical and artistic bewilderments once found on the walls of the men's toilets and as a result I have held the can in higher esteem than normal, when deep rumblings drive me to its inner sanctum. But now the U of A men's cans are a low point in my life.

The first year of my stay was great fun. Every Friday afternoon, while everyone was in the Corona, I would sneak up to the second floor of Cameron and head for the south-west can. This particular room had the wittiest material to be found on campus. Here I would spend hours (comfortably) pondering over the many little witticisms, scratched on the cubicle walls.

Many were quite good, for example one of the oldy goldies would be: We aim to please. You aim too, please. Or what about: What are you looking up here for?

The jokes were often so good a student would enter the washroom much before the actual time came, just to get a head start on the walls. Drawings were relatively rare in those days, perhaps only the odd attempt on a Peanuts theme. Nothing provocative.

Each washroom had its own personality. For example: The north-east can was one which obviously entertained a much more philosophical clientele. On one particular Friday I found at least 21 E equals Mc²'s, 12 different theories of evolution, in a

nutshell, and the name and number of an apparently popular girl.

That was 1965, a good year for toilet fans. However, now I dare no longer to enter those confines of wisdom. I would rather take my chances on a brisk walk home, cutting through as many service roads as possible, for the witticisms are gone, great theories are no longer written and the Peanuts crowd has graduated (unless Lucy has grown up) leaving behind only pleasant memories.

Now if a girl's name is honored on the wall, her number is excluded and in its place, showing the strains of reaching, are diagrams of the front, rear and side of the girl, in amazing details. This is generally assisted by artistic employment of door hinges, paper dispensers and the like. Any written work is vulgar to even the most open minds. The mode of writing usually shows that the writer was in great haste and as a result shows embarrassment at his own thoughts.

What has happened to the great mends and shy artists that once lingered in the washrooms? What would induce a man (?) to write upon a wall in great letters: DOWN WITH PANTS! and then follow up with an accurate diagram? What causes a man to draw a series of new positions for beginners? I don't give a damn about what Gertrude X does. What type of human (?) is satisfied and gratified by writing such realism on walls? Is he frustrated or does he have a fetish? Nevertheless I am woeed to spend the rest of my Friday afternoons at the Corona, seeking refuge from those evil can writers and pondering on a way of keeping the path to my house clear of obstacles which could cause damaging exertion in those times of stress.

There must be a solution. Perhaps the Campus Patrol could set up a series of closed circuit television cameras in the cubicles and catch the rotters in action. Or possibly a Campus Can Detective could be appointed, who could sneak around and pounce immediately on those writing on the walls.

Best of all, an automatic wall flushing system should be set up which would go into action the second that the regular flush occurs, thus washing the walls of any dirt, for in my opinion far too much is left behind, which should have been flushed down the toilet.

H. L. Diemer
Sci 3

This is page FIVE

This page is a forum for student opinion. We try to print written accounts of the situations and ideas that frustrate students, confound them or make them, oh God, happy.

Send contributions to The Editor, The Gateway, or bring them to room 282 of the Students' Union Building.

Remember that we do not appreciate people who have lots to say but request that their name not be signed to their opinion. It is our policy not to print unsigned articles or pseudonyms.

Does the union aid students?

Students,

On Tuesday, Dec. 3, I had a few of my illusions crushed. Both to comfort myself and to enlighten you, I would like to relate my encounter with the bureaucracy of our Student Union.

At approximately 4:30 p.m. I called the Student Union office to obtain permission to have my husband paged. I had locked myself out of my suite and had been standing outside in the cold, wind and snow for approximately six hours. I was freezing and I had not eaten all day. My husband assumed that I was on campus and was waiting for me in the main floor of SUB. The only way I could reach him was to have him paged. All this I explained to some unidentified female who referred me to some unidentified male who informed me (in a rather patronizing and abrupt manner) that paging was allowed only in emer-

gencies and this situation was not an emergency. He referred me to the information desk. I spent my last dime calling the information desk where I was treated with courtesy and sympathy, if not action. It is unfortunate when rules become more important than people. My husband and I waited an additional hour before the mix-up was resolved without the aid of the Student Union. I requested only a minute or two of someone's time and the brief use of the loudspeaker facilities (which are not overly busy anyway).

You and I paid a considerable sum for the privilege of belonging to the Student Union. I was under the erroneous impression that the function of the Student Union is to aid students. I am educated, but disappointed.

Linda Morrill
Ed 2

Issues were clouded, distorted — so let's have another look

By DON WHITESIDE

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For the past few months there has been a struggle in the sociology department over the violation of our normal operating procedures when it was "decided" to re-organize the department. These violations were felt to be so serious that a group of us decided to formally register our protest with Dean D. E. Smith, academic vice-president Max Wymann, university president W. H. Johns, the General Faculty Council and the Canadian Association of University Teachers. The extensiveness of these formal appeals indicate both our desire to use existing channels of appeal and the conviction that our appeal is justified. Each was informed of the situation and asked for assistance. The outcome of these appeals is not yet firmly established. However, since the changes were instituted in our departmental structure a number of our staff have decided not to deal with the issues, the gross violation of normal procedures, but have attempted to publicly justify their actions as necessary due to pre-existing conditions in the department. Mixed with this strategy are the personal attacks on the behavior and integrity of the dissenters.

Sinister accusations

As a result of these public statements, which include half-truths and sinister accusations, the original issue over the violation of accepted principles and procedures has been clouded. Perhaps some objective data can be used to clarify the situation; assess the validity of these public arguments given for the changes so abruptly made; and thus force us to deal with the issues once more.

The most publicized argument is that the democratic decision-making process that was only beginning to be implemented in our department was not operative. Staff meetings were said to be frequent, long, and very upsetting due to the disruptive behavior of a number of our staff. Business was not being conducted, and as a consequence there was a need for a change in the department's structure so we could escape from the wilderness of endless debate and discussion that democracy had spawned.

Let us examine the validity of this argument by comparing items recorded in the minutes of our staff meetings for last academic year (67-68) and this year (68-69). I will not argue that this data is ideally suited for the task but in the absence of any other objective information it takes clear precedence over personal opinions. I must apologize for the detailed information that immediately follows but it is a necessary procedure if we are to evaluate the validity of the public argument.

More meetings

Comparing the number of staff meetings (summer session meetings are not included) in the last academic year (16) with those of this year (6) we note that our sixth meeting last year was on Dec. 18 and our sixth meeting this year was Nov. 11. Thus, the number of meetings has increased slightly.

In 67-68, the average meeting lasted two hours and 40 minutes; in 68-69, two hours and 10 minutes. Thus, the meetings are now much shorter. Incidentally, I would argue that spending approximately four hours a month to govern a department of 5,000 undergraduate enrolled students, 80 graduate students, either 23 or 31 staff members, and 10 secretaries and professional workers, is not unreasonable.

Comparing the number of motions (all motions on comprehensive examination results, curriculum changes, and adjournment, are not included), in 67-68, 60 motions were dealt with in the 16 meetings. In 68-69, 37 motions were handled in the six meetings. Thus, business was being conducted at a much faster rate this year.

In 67-68, 16 per cent of the motions were

withdrawn, postponed, or defeated. Similarly, this year 16 per cent of the motions shared this fate. Since so few motions were "lost" in both years it is difficult to argue that the department suffered from a serious split on the issues brought to discussion.

In 67-68, 57 per cent of the staff (12) did not have their names listed in the minutes as making a comment or asking a question. This year only 22 per cent (5) of the staff have not been mentioned in discussions, etc. In this year then, more staff members were formally noted as participating in this area of activity in our departmental meetings.

Calculations and conclusions

Another indicator of participation is a tally of the total number of comments, questions, motions, etc., made by the staff. In 67-68, 243 comments, etc., are listed; this year 121 comments, etc., are listed. Clearly then, the number of comments, etc., has increased this year. Much more significant, however, is the fact that each staff member is participating more frequently in the meetings, as the following data indicate (I will use initials to identify my colleagues so that the minutes can be rechecked). In 67-68, one person (GKH) contributed 37 per cent of the total number of comments, etc.; two persons (GKH and GN) contributed 48 per cent; and five persons (GKH, GN, KC, CWH and BA) contributed 70 per cent of the total number of the 243 comments, etc. In 68-69, three persons (GKH, CWH, and DW) only contributed 39 per cent; and five persons (GKH, CWH, DW, WM and SF) contributed 52 per cent of the total number of the 121 comments, etc. In short, the dominance of one or two persons in the meetings has been reduced sharply this year.

Role of dissenters

A final aspect of participation is the role of the dissenters in the meetings. First, eight of us, or about 35 per cent of the participating staff, have a total of 24 per cent of the comments, etc., this year. Secondly, we made about 22 per cent of the motions (eight of the 37) and only two were not "accepted" by the staff. Those two motions are: a motion to accept in principle a CAUT statement on tenure practices, which was tabled; and a notice of intent to motion the adoption of Robert's Rules of Order.

As both of these items were never discussed at subsequent meetings we do not know if they would have been finally accepted.

Finally, there is no evidence of filibustering or unnecessarily prolonged discussion of any issue by us. Thus, the group that is opposed to recent "decisions" was not dominating or disrupting the meetings, or espousing unacceptable or radical positions.

Less time involved

Such is the data gleaned from our minutes. While admittedly crude it indicates that our meetings this year, although slightly more frequent, involved less actual time. In addition, more business was conducted; the prior dominance of one or two persons was sharply reduced; more people were actively involved in the discussions; and there was no indication of disruptive behavior.

So much for the publicized reasons given for the necessity of the drastic violations of accepted democratic principles in the reorganization of the department.

They are clearly unsupported by objective data.

It is hoped that this information will clear away the confusion that has been spread about the necessity for the recent changes in our department. In conclusion, I would strongly argue that Professors Hirabayashi and Forster have a responsibility to the department and the university to publicly provide the valid explanation for the recent departmental changes.