

The Gateway

member of the canadian university press

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STAFF THIS ISSUE—Oh, the trying times of 23 below weather. It helps quell student unrest at this university but aids indoor activities, especially when it comes to discussions over mixed visiting in res. It also seems to be directly correlated to the heat in the hotbed of student politics. But 23-below is ridiculous when we take pictures at 11 p.m. Ina van Nieuwkerk froze her too-too but Steve Makris burned out a lens in the heat of the moment. Others who helped warm the couch in the far from frigid temperature in the Gateway office were: Ken Bailey, Peggi Selby, Randy (exasperated) Jankowski, Dale Rogers, Shelagh Parsons (no relation to Louella), Terry Petit, Andy von Busse, Catriona Sinclair, Rolf Stengl, Bob Anderson, Joe Czajkowski, Gail Evasiuk, Dan Carroll, Brian MacDonald, Joe (frozen snowballs) MacAnally, and your hot and panting snake Harvey G. Thomgirt, the torrid, tantalizing temperature warmer of SUB.

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THURSDAY, JANUARY 16, 1969

Students, faculty should elect the new university president

The way it stands now, an 11-man committee will serve in an advisory capacity to the Board of Governors in the selection of a successor to university president Walter Johns, who vacates August, 1969.

Provision has been made for three students to sit on this committee.

This is in keeping with the administration theory that there are responsible students who will contribute intelligently to such a task. What the administration actually knows, of course, is that there are several students on the students' council whom they know are responsible and they will let these people either sit on the committee themselves or have the power to say who will be appointed to sit on the committee.

This is called "communication" in the university community. In a recent newspaper article, Marilyn Pilkington, students' union president, was quoted as saying that one of the reasons the students' union has made significant gains in representation on administrative bodies is due "to good communications between students and the governing bodies".

What she means is that certain members of the executive and the students' council have good communications with certain administrative heads.

With a couple of these responsible students on the selection committee, nothing would be upset and the tough business of choosing a new president could go on in the manner the Board of Governors wants.

Education rep Greg Berry voiced disapproval at this method of selection of the president and presented a brief to council asking that a campus-wide election be held instead.

Berry's proposal would have the 11-man committee organizing a free election in which all students and faculty are allowed to vote. There would be provision for faculty as a group to have equal voting power with students as a group.

This election would choose the new university president and Berry's

proposal suggests that the Board of Governors merely ratify the election results and make the winning candidate president of The University of Alberta.

To this we would add two conditions:

(a) that at least 50 per cent of all full time students vote and 66 per cent of all eligible faculty must vote before the election is binding. This guards against minority groups holding a large hand in the selection merely because scores of students forget to vote.

(b) if sufficient numbers of student and faculty do not vote, the power to select the university president is turned over to the 11-man committee. In this case, election results are kept secret.

This university administration has acquired a reputation for being generous in its delegation of certain voting privileges to its students. Witness representation on the Board of Governors and General Faculty Council.

We believe the administration and the Board of Governors should delegate such responsibility to all students in a case as important as selection of the new university president. If students are indeed responsible, they will live up to the obligation and consider the alternatives seriously.

Even if sufficient numbers do not vote, at least students will have had a chance to hear and see the people who are candidates for university president. The candidates would campaign actively, if they were serious about the job.

Exposure such as this would be tremendously healthy for the university community since one of the prime problems here is that students have no idea who the dominant figures in the university are or what they are thinking or what they are doing.

An open election would do much to cure the lack of unity. It's only too bad that the person who presented the motion, Greg Berry, resigned when it was defeated. Council cannot afford to lose students who contribute ideas to the university.

The Gallery had its say; but council was the winner

By PETER BOOTHROYD

What do you write about a students' council meeting? Only a Mark Twain could really do justice to the challenge of adequately describing these meetings to the person who has not seen it for himself. If there is a student on this campus who has a highly developed sense of the absurd, an intimate understanding of politics, and an evocative writing style, he could write the year's top Gateway article. If he's really good, he has the material for winning the Stephen Leacock Award in humor.

For myself, I intend to stick to analyzing the issues and to avoid all temptations to describe Pilkington's pride. As usual, I lay no claim to detached objectivity.

On two issues last Monday students' council clashed with SDU'ers in the gallery. The gallery was opposed to students' council supporting the Three Alberta universities fund-raising campaign (for capital expansion). It was also opposed to students' council uncritically accepting the three seats offered it on the presidential advisory selection committee by the Board of Governors.

Those from the gallery who spoke supported a motion introduced by councillor Greg Berry to the effect that students and faculty should elect the new president. Naturally, the side supported by the gallery was in both cases handily defeated. Naturally, in both cases, Miss Pilkington presented the resolutions which council passed.

In both cases the difference between the majority of the gallery and the majority of council lay in the fundamental differences in ideology between the two groups. Most councillors apparently accept the claim of the power-holders in the university (the board) that they know what is best for the university. If the board says "we need a fund-raising campaign" then student council agrees, no matter what long-range arguments are advanced in opposition to the board's plan, and no matter how little information is given to council about the costs of the fund-raising.

Most councillors apparently feel that the process of democratization has reached the perfect balance in this society. Thus, they feel that mayors, MPs and students councillors should be elected (because they now are) but that university presidents should not be elected (because they now are not elected). C. Wright Mills had a term which might be applicable here: "crackpot realism".

Most of the gallery, on the other hand, believed that the present power-holders do not have a corner on truth and that like everybody else, the governors of this university see matters through a particular perspective: that of the managerial pro-capitalist. Most of the gallery saw the need for extending democracy beyond its present forms. They saw no reason, beyond blind support of the status quo or belief in the transcendental goodness of the Board of Governors, for not picking the president of the university through some form of election.

Finally, we in the gallery saw the need for a students' council which thinks for itself and works out its own solutions for problems like presidential succession. The sight of our supposed representatives quickly accepting the board's proposal for picking the new president, and obsequiously thanking the board for its

largesse, was too much. It was too much for at least one councillor too. Greg Berry resigned his seat as Education rep only to be petulantly asked by Miss Pilkington what he had contributed to council. Contributing to council, it seems, means accepting Miss Pilkington's interpretation of important matters.

One of the problems facing council seems to be an anachronistic form of organization. Dealing with issues from charter-flights to presidential selections, the council members have no time for internal education. Without a coherent philosophy in the university and the students' role in it, councillors are left at the mercy of the smoothest talker and the hardest pusher. Thus Marilyn Pilkington, with the majority of executive support, can formulate a resolution previous to the meeting, and be quite sure of it being accepted by an uncritical council.

This problem could be solved by distinguishing more carefully between administrative matters and policy decisions. The former could be delegated to a committee established by council so that more time could be devoted in the actual council meetings, or in special sessions, to thinking about and debating matters of political importance.

The claim made several times in Monday's council meeting to the effect that the councillors supposedly representative of student opinion is not justification for council's docility in matters of university politics. It is perhaps true that the students at U of A deserve the council they have, but this does not excuse council from offering more leadership. Nor does it mean that council should refuse to encourage the general student body to become involved in matters such as the fund-drive, and the presidential selection, by holding referendums on issues of such importance after the issues have been thoroughly aired in public meetings. The CUS referendum is one step taken of this kind. Why couldn't the same be done on matters of equal importance?

Twice Monday night a council member raised this possibility, but Miss Pilkington quickly returned to the "we're the representatives" bit and, of course, that was that. Such a haughty attitude by Miss Pilkington and the complacent acceptance of it by the rest of council is particularly annoying when you recall that most of the platforms these people ran on last year included some provision for "increased communication between council and students" or "more involvement by students in students' union affairs" or "let's break down the students' council clique".

Despite all that has been said above, however, I was impressed, and humbled, by council's willingness to entertain quite a bit of discussion from the gallery and to carry on its meeting well past midnight because of this discussion. Perhaps this shows that most of the councillors are not only open to debate but feel starved for serious discussion of important issues.

If so, Miss Pilkington could relieve herself of at least some of the strain of her office if she worried less about directing council along the path she painstakingly prescribes and place more trust in her councillors to develop their own ideas on matters which require serious on-going analysis. The councillors, in turn, might start trusting the students more.