

# editorial

I'll admit, the campaigning this year — with exception of the joke slate — has been pretty disappointing. If there was any doubt that the sixties were dead on campus, this election has nailed the coffin shut forever.

We've got two slates concocted at the last minute from this year's politicians whose members would probably function equally well in whatever combination they may be elected. The NUS referendum has degenerated into a battle of wits between the clever organizers behind the pro- and anti-NUS factions. The independent candidates are simply ignored because they are alone.

Clearly there is little evidence to disprove the specious, pervasive theory that the Students' Union is a flabby, isolated and self-serving body. It seems you either play the game of student politics for keeps or not at all. And the unrelenting sincerity, and the platitudes (with or without action) do not make up for the lack of issues. We are understandably cynical.

But really what else can we expect? Whatever we may think about the SU executive, it is charged with an awesome responsibility. With 20,000 constituents, a 3.6 million dollar budget, representation on most university policy-making bodies, and over 25 student services and retail outlets the five executive members must possess a superior knowledge of the governing system of the university. They must sacrifice at least one academic year (not unrewarded, of course) and take the shit that is inevitably flung at them from all directions.

Who else but hard-core SU types would have the desire or the ability to do the job? We ought to be sure to give the positions to the most deserving of those who even want them. Reviewing the candidates isn't fun, but you do have a choice.

And NUS. We've had two sides flailing "facts" at us for a week now and confusion is still apparent among those who are not intimately involved. It seems we are voting on the effectiveness of the supporters and detractors of the National Union of Students rather than the organization itself. Do we need NUS?

Well, if NUS was *right wing* and dominated by the *West*, would it be a *better* national organization? We dump \$304,000 into the UAB; couldn't we put that money to better use too? Finally, if we turn NUS down, how likely is it that we'll work from without the organization to make necessary changes? While we're rotating on our thumbs, the federal government will continue to make significant decisions affecting students. And we won't be in any position to argue.

Spoiling ballots (as suggested by the RWL) is not the answer to a dull campaign. Unfortunately, there is no answer.

Instead, make the choices. Choose leadership, rather than responsiveness because our student government needs to be able to take action in a short period of time. Choose individuals rather than a slate, because there is still no evidence that a slate is more cohesive in office. Choose NUS because the service it provides at the national level is not available to us in any form otherwise.

Though the Liberal Democrats would disagree, the SU elections and the NUS referendum aren't a joke. They set the stage for a whole new and crucial academic year. And from the looks of it, in 1979-80 students all need all the help we can elect.

Loreen Lennon

The question period, which should be a vital part of an election forum, has become a joke. There were so many plants yesterday I thought I was in a greenhouse. It's ok to have a friend or two corner your opponent with tough questions but when people are getting their cohorts to ask them leading questions so they can make extra speeches things have gone too far.

## the Gateway

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# We say NUS is necessary

On Friday, students will be asked to vote on whether or not the U of A should belong to the National Union of Students.

The campaign thus far seems to have been dominated by the question of whether NUS is controlled by the East and the left wing. This is not the question that should concern students; instead, students should think about whether there is a need for NUS, and whether NUS satisfies this need.

Few people will deny that we need representation on the national level. National policies do affect students. Immigration policies, which have profound implications for international students and thus also for domestic students, are determined at the federal level. Research funds come, to a great extent, from federal agencies, and they are being cut. The federal budget for student and

non-profit housing was cut this year by \$85 million. Most importantly, about 50% of educational costs come from a federal fund which was cut by \$450 million in 1977.

NUS has been active in its role as the federal representative of students. In 1976, NUS played a major role in having the Young Canada Works program created. This program supplied 26,000 jobs. In 1978, the federal Immigration department proposed restrictions on graduate assistantships for visa students. These restrictions, which would have compromised the quality of university education, were postponed due to the efforts of NUS and the Canadian Association of University Teachers. Last year, NUS and provincial student associations were important in stopping a \$165 million cut to education and health spending.

So education and policies

important to students are not just provincial in scope. NUS has been doing a good job for students, and with our strength behind it, NUS can do an even better job. That is what counts and that is what you should remember when you vote Friday.

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# Ignorance is no excuse

I am writing regarding Mike Dowling's letter "Visa rules are fair". I feel I am qualified to voice my opinion because of two things. 1) I myself studied on a student's visa in the U.S. 2) I am from India, though I am a Canadian now.

I agree with both Dowling

and Whitbourne. Canada's immigration laws are not unlike immigration rules they have for students on student visas in other countries. I remember well the words of a U.S. Immigration officer to a friend of mine who unknowingly procrastinated and almost got deported, "Ignorance

of the law is no excuse". It sums it all. It certainly would be too demanding of a foreign student to ask that he keep abreast of the constantly changing chameleon-like immigration laws in Canada.

I also agree with Whitbourne that it causes a plethora of hardships for foreign students if they get deported; but if the threat of possible deportation lurks in the background, students would do well to be enlightened of the immigration laws that affect them. One word regarding the remark on the front page of Friday's Gateway about the media being "the kind of program that would make an engineer blush". Pray, tell me who is the ignoramus who wrote that word up! Certainly wouldn't be an engineer!!

Harry S. An  
Engineer

# Letter offensive

I have taken offense to Mr. McElgunn's letter of February 6. His letter is a direct smear to the O'Kurley campaign and although it may not have a significant effect on the voting outcome the letter borders on slander.

The Gateway's conduct in printing such a letter prior to an election, or at any time, is reprehensible. The letter does

not deal with any specific issue, but rather it is an attempt to discredit a candidate.

Those who would treat a Student Union election as a joke have that right, but the JUVENILE and DEFAMATORY behavior of Jim McElgunn should never have surfaced in this publication.

Willie Gruber  
Commerce III

# The more things change...

SU Elections have always been considered a farce, and this year is no different. I think that I have only once been shocked and horrified at an election forum; that was when Eileen Gillese mentioned the problem of rape on campus and was greeted with laughter from the audience.

Maybe the "joke" slates do serve a useful purpose: more people come to the forum for the entertainment, so more people end up becoming informed by being there.

One thing has changed, though. It used to be that we had the Young Socialists out in left field with maybe three identical slates of cardboard cutouts (the debating club/community service-group/canoeing club type). Now, we have somewhat less plastic straight slates, and a clear political polarization among them.

One thing I'll predict in advance. (I didn't join the NUS vote pool, being cautious.) Len Thom is not going to be the next SU president. Saying we shouldn't boycott South Africa!

Myself, I think that if we don't invade the country to create a genuinely democratic government, a policy of boycotts alone creates the danger of Communism, a horror no better than apartheid, or taking over, as I've said in only two previous letters to the Gateway. Nevertheless, we should not buy from those who engage in employment discrimination.

However, consistency is called for here. The university should boycott all products made from Saudi Arabian oil, since Saudi Arabian women were not allowed to drive cars, and you can't run an oil refinery without truckdrivers.

Of course, in an imperfect world where democracy is scarce, it's pretty easy to get carried away when one proceeds in such a fashion.

One more thing. Here's one election promise no slate has ever brought forwards before.

"The Students' Union should buy its own computer (maybe we can get the old 360/67 if the library hasn't bought it yet)

# Tunnel vision in Res

The main intent of Gail Brown's "proposals" appeared to be two-fold. That is, to attempt to make the residence a financially viable institution and to make it a place more conducive to studying.

The recent re-organization of the Ship appears to run counter to both these attempts. The hiring of a full-time manager plus part-time staff will obviously incur a considerable and ongoing expense. Any gains made by the elimination of positions on student government will very probably be nullified by the additional expenses of running the Ship.

both to save money on its data processing and to provide computer utility to the students.

"This way, students can Wumpus, Kingdom, Start and Adventure without tying up computer resources needed for teaching and research! Or their own income tax! Students' Union could make a profit on the whole thing as well as providing a really service to the students — that would make the stuff in games room look sick!"

Sigh. Where have the days of creative politics gone?

John Sav  
Grad Stud

The New prices (coffee beer 90c) and format (no "staples" such as pizza, a charge three or more nights week) also appear conducive to more socializing on the floor rather than in Ship, thereby possibly contributing to an atmosphere even less conducive to studying.

Gail Brown and company's unfortunate tendency toward tunnel vision when it comes to managerial decisions is more demonstrated.

Tony Gnanasihanam  
Main Hen  
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