

## Guidelines for boycotting beer

This letter is written in response to Michalyshyn's editorial entitled 'Apartheid Crime?'

Although the editorial informed the student population that *Gateway* staff decided to continue running advertising for Carling O'Keefe, it did not specify why. Outlined in the editorial were arguments (mostly con) about boycotting companies like Carling.

If one begins with the premise that Carling's investments in South Africa are supporting an apartheid regime (economically and/or philosophically) then the option of boycotting that company's advertising is inevitably one action which the newspaper may take in response to the issue. Obviously the *Gateway* staff has reached that premise or the issue would not have arisen.

However, in spite of the fact that the *Gateway* seems to be in a similar situation to a student sitting in RATT and deciding whether or not to drink Canadian rather than OV or 50, advertising boycotts carry more implications for the paper than they do for the average consumer.

RATT carries all brands of beer in accordance with ALCB stipulations and creates a scenario where an active choice has to be made about which beer to drink ergo which company to support. But this choice can not be made without adequate information.

The *Gateway's* responsibility to its public to provide information about the activities of companies like Carling is no doubt taken as a given. But when the paper debates boycotts of these companies, its economic stability, survival, and journalistic philosophy must also be taken into account.

If boycotting O'Keefe will not impair the number of pages you print or limit your maintenance budget then the staff must debate the role of the paper itself. Is the role of the press to report (in this case on the situation in South Africa and O'Keefe's investments there) or

to report and actively protest by boycotts?

Active protest is a decision made by individuals. If consensus on the issue cannot be reached by the staff then the decision to boycott should not be made. But by merely debating the issue, the staff is recognizing its importance and the need for the public to be informed about it. Michalyshyn's editorial was a very positive affirmation of this. Hopefully more information about Carling's investments in South Africa and the situation there will appear in the *Gateway*.

My response to the questions which were debated in the staff meeting is that they dealt with important side issues about boycotting advertising. Unfortunately these side issues tend to detract from the real issue which is the paper's role. They also tend to create circular and inconclusive arguments which are fairly evenly weighted and one tends to find the argument bouncing back and forth like an inflatable doll with a weighted bottom each time you push it over.

For example, although the effectiveness of boycotts is often brought up as a negative factor in these discussions, it must be remembered that the boycott process is a gradual one.

It took several years for the grape boycott to become effective. The Moral Majority has had more luck in this area recently by threatening to bring pressure against sponsors and producers of tv shows they deemed not suitable for family viewing through boycotts. Clearly the organizational skills of the groups and its image has a great deal to do with the effectiveness of their boycotts as well as the group the boycott is directed at. The argument that Carling ideologically supports apartheid by investing in South America is something that can not be proven. Although Carling is supporting the South African government's economic base, I suspect that it would support the Azanian (free South Africa) government's base as well.

The interesting argument of whether or not capitalism is in itself is an ideology is also circular. It is true that capitalism is a part of some ideologies while socialism is a part of others. And as for the question, do boycotts hurt people in South Africa who are being hurt by apartheid in the first place — it is not properly formulated.

Are you referring to the white minority which has found itself in the unpleasant situation of sleeping with guns under their pillows to ensure their rights and standard of living or the black majority which lives mostly on compounds, has a low standard of living and few rights? What does 'hurt' mean? The staffer who commented that beliefs aren't worth a 'tinker's damn' unless they're acted on is right. But the way in which these beliefs are acted on is crucial to staff morale and the image the paper wishes to project.

The only way boycotts can become effective is if people actually do boycott. And the only way people will make a choice to boycott is if they are well informed about the situation which prompts the need for a boycott.

The press has a responsibility to the public (as I know you're well aware) and to itself. If discussions on boycotting arise again perhaps more background on the suppression of human rights in South Africa, the paper's finances and the staff's perception of the role of the press should be the focal points of debate rather than the effectiveness of the action. If you don't boycott then obviously it will have no effect and you invalidate the discussion before it even begins.

So why defeat yourselves before you begin talking about the problem? The level of awareness about the issue at the *Gateway* is terrific. Perhaps with more direction, the issue could be more thoroughly discussed again and a consensus could be reached one way or another.

S. Matheson  
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Co-ordinator

## DOGNUTS

### Mandarin City, Ontario

The federal government has taken quick action on the attempted 'subversion' uncovered here last week by the new intelligence wing of the Mounted Police. The investigation came following reports of government brochures outlining plans for a National Banking Plan. The proposed plan would have restricted interest rates, put a surtax on banking profits, and created a new publicly owned BankCan for the lending of money.

The Mounties, after steaming letters of a number of government departments and examining a number of magazines in plain brown wrappers received by civil servants, traced the brochures to a group of radicals from Saskatchewan who had worked their way into the upper echelons of one department.

These members of the *Slavics for a non-Capitalist Future*, a fringe group which received less than 30 per cent of the general vote in the last Saskatchewan general election, were declared 'political prisoners' found to be members of an apprehended insurrection' under the new powers granted the Government by Order-in-Council and were incarcerated in federal high security prisons in various areas of Canada.

### Lotusland, British Columbia

The leader of the B.C. Liberal party has shifted the party's emphasis to better use of Tourism, according to one of his aides. Commenting on a speech made to the general membership, the highly placed aide told the *Gateway* "a new direction is needed, and I think we have plans to really capitalize on all the people who could benefit by an increase in guests to this province." The leader has also announced plans to change to the Downtown Lotus riding which includes the train station.

In a non-related item, convicted mass-murder Clifford Olson has been released on his own recognizance. Officers of the Solicitor-General's department cited a lack of prison cells as the main reason. They also hinted that by leaving him loose some of the \$30,000 per year cost of incarceration could be put towards paying the \$100,000 paid to him for information.



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