

EDITORIAL

Depart-mental

Once again, the provincial government has managed to pacify the masses with measures designed to maintain the status quo in education.

But the victims this time are the students and educators of this province, who have been shafted by the Department of Education's recent decision to implement optional departmental-type comprehensive grade 12 exams.

On the surface, the idea appears to be a good one: not all high school students plan to attend post secondary institutions, so it makes sense to exempt these people from difficult and strenuous exams. But although only eight percent of Alberta high school students attend university, the costs of making the exam optional far outweigh the benefits.

In the first place, the exam is hardly "optional". Aside from its potential use as a university entrance requirement, which no one seems to have caught, would be as a qualifying exam for the new provincial scholarship program. Large sums of money are involved (up to \$1,500 for first year university students) and basing these awards solely on high marks would be suspect. The pressure to inflate results would be intense, and this has probably crossed the government's mind more than once. But no official announcement has been made on the subject.

Once the exams are used for university scholarships for which all Alberta students are eligible, it is a small step to creating a university entrance exam. This undoubtedly unpopular move, however, has been conveniently left to the university.

So the pressure to perform, and perform well, will be back on the student. To win valuable scholarships and gain entrance to university, students will, in effect, be forced to write what is billed as a voluntary exam.

The other function of a comprehensive exam is to evaluate the educational system. If students are obliged to write comprehensive exams, it only makes sense to use them as well to pinpoint weaknesses and aberrations in the system, whether they be a result of inadequate facilities, poor instruction, or outdated and ineffective curricula.

As usual, though, the provincial government wants to have it both ways. They want to force universities and employers into demanding exam scores for entrance or job opportunities, while preventing the exams from being used to solve the problems that made them necessary. If the exams are not written by all students, they are useless for evaluating different school districts.

If our secondary (and junior) school systems are as bad as everyone claims, the government should not hesitate to implement changes. The crisis in education is not about to be ameliorated as long as the government refuses to use the few tools it possesses.

Keith Krause.

the Gateway

If it happens on campus...it's news to us.

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Brief is just full of surprises

I nearly choked on my CABurger when I read the front page of November 25's *Gateway*. Imagine my shock upon reading that a brief from the SU to Jim Horsman "includes statistics showing that students from wealthier backgrounds are much less likely to require student loans." Even more horrible is the amazing disclosure that "poorer families are less likely to subsidize their child's education."

I find it ludicrous that anyone would have the audacity (I'll be kind and call it audacity) to waste the effort and paper necessary to produce information nearly as useful as statistics showing that the sun is much less likely to rise in the west as in the east. I somehow doubt if Mr. Horsman will be surprised by these statistical revelations, especially since not only do many less-wealthy parents, mine for example, understandably lack the resources to contribute anything at all towards their child's education, but the

student loan regulations also require wealthier parents to contribute towards their privileged offspring's education. If it is true that poorer parents are able to see their children go to university without mortgaging the family farm, then this might mean that for once the student finance program in this province is doing something right.

Nolan, this data does not indicate "that tuition fees do have an effect on whether one can

attend university." Other data may support this conclusion, but submitting ridiculous information to Mr. Horsman will only undermine our credibility. I appreciate your efforts on the students' behalf, so please consider this as constructive criticism. Just spare us, please, from any more "meaningful" statistics such as these, to save me from asphyxiating on real food next time.

Richard Glasel
Commerce II

An unjustified slight

This letter has to do with the picture of Dr. Steve Hunka and the two education ministers on the front page of the November 6 issue of the *Gateway*. In the caption, you make reference to "three middle-aged farts." In one easy step, you have given new meaning to the phrase "this university would be a great place without students."

Surely a public apology is due to Dr. Hunka. After all, it was the Students' Union which requested Dr. Hunka to assist them in putting on this tour for the government MLAs. And more importantly a little bit of research on your part would divulge that Dr. Hunka has always been a leader in advancing the cause of this university. Your methods are distasteful, and must be considered as one of the causes for the dwindling support of this institution.

Norman P. McGinnis
Division of
Educational Research
Services,
Faculty of
Education

An adoring fan

Yes, Hironaka:
"Goose pimples rose all over me, my hair stood on end, my eyes filled with tears of love and gratitude for this greatest of all conquerors of human misery and shame, and my breath came in little gasps. If I had not known that the Leader would have scorned such adulation, I might have fallen to my knees in unashamed worship, but instead I drew myself to attention, raised my arm in the eternal salute of the ancient Roman Legions and repeated the holy words, 'Heil, Christie!'" (Adapted from George Lincoln Rockwell.)

Benito Mussolini: "Fascism, which was not afraid to call itself reactionary.... does not hesitate to call itself illiberal and anti-liberal."

Gordon Soukoreff
Ag IV

And in the famous words of

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