

Reader comment

by Peter Michalshyn

"... students representing students." So ends Gordon Turtle in his editorial of last *Gateway* issue.

Gordon was complaining about the apolitical nature of our Students' Union, saying we have here elected over the years "careerist administrators" instead of political moguls.

He says "student concerns have ended up being insignificant compared to the smooth, profitable operation of RATT and SU Records." I think students are most concerned about the "profitable operations" of these popular businesses; much more concerned than they are about the boycott of Southern African products. And while I may be sticking my neck out, students don't really care about Vietnamese refugees either. As the notably outspoken journalist, Gordon Sinclair says, "I don't want them here," and he knows most of us are just too afraid to say the same thing and be branded an un-humanitarian bum, like Gordon Sinclair.

"Students representing students" is what the U of A has now, with what Turtle calls "a quasi-Grad school in Business Administration"; our Students' Union, no less, and I couldn't have thought of a more appropriate term.

The apolitical Students' Union

representing the apolitical student body. Students here don't care about abstract human rights issues. They don't even care about things going on which directly affect them, evidenced by the poor response to last year's cutbacks campaign. They don't care about people like Jim Horsman, who may or may not have some input into how the university is run. They don't care about national issues which may be political, because they rejected NUS last year. All in all, the last few years have been good for political non-activists.

Ask the average student what she is most concerned about, and (I'm no chauvinist, David Marples!) she'll probably say the unworkable table service policy up in RATT. Students are more interested in things, non-issues, which affect them directly. Moreover, they don't like to be told what is an issue and what is not.

When students see a newly expanded SU Records in HUB, they are happy. When they read about refugees in the *Gateway*, or anywhere else, they are at best, indifferent. When they have to wait 30 minutes for service up in RATT, they are angry, and wondering why their Students' Union is piddling away at politics, rather than taking care of proper business.

An activist Students' Union is not

wanted here. Furthermore, it is not needed here. Liken our Students' Union to the administration of this city. The citizens of Edmonton do not want humanitarian leaders, they want half-assed businessmen who can run the place with a minimum of controversy and financial commitment. Politics has no place in the administration of a city, nor of a Students' Union.

If it is clear, as I think it is, that students who support their union with substantial fees don't care about so-called political issues, then it is the duty of that union to respond to what the students do want. And don't tell us we don't know what we want and that what we want isn't good for us. Such political maneuvering is for people who want someone to actually lead them, in the literal sense. We don't need leaders, we need someone to handle our dirty work, the administrative work we don't have time or expertise for. In this sense, politicians should really be the servants of the people.

Don't tell us that the "anachronistic" Cheryl Hume, our activist Students' Union president last year, knew what was good for us, in classic political style. In fact, it seems the people who elected Hume last year must have been the same ones who marched on the legislature two year ago. In any

case, those 5000 people must have all graduated, because no such activist sentiment has been seen on this campus since then.

After all, the now disposed-of "philosopher-king" in Ottawa thought he knew what was good for us for 11 years, but finally even he was thrown out. Joe says he is going to consult us, but beware of the temptations of political power. Joe already tried to show us how smart he was with his embassy thing, but maybe that experience will deter him from other such ideals, and convince him to remain as a mediocre but hard-working administrator.

Playing politics in a way is easier than administering. Good politicians are born, and people trying to imitate a good politician will be doing an impossible job. A mediocre administrator can get by with a lot of hard work, while there are no truly good administrators. The point is, if Olmstead and his gang can administer this place without becoming embroiled in political controversy, they will have achieved their primary task, and the heck with Turtle.

Ed. Note. In my editorial I did not state or imply Cheryl Hume was good or bad. I just noted the election of a political candidate seemed out of place.

Varied tasks on Chilean trip

I just read yesterday's paper and I have one small but important correction to make.

On page three, under "Students fight cuts" the article states I am being sent to Chile to "discover the fate of the radical students imprisoned by the Chilean junta."

I would like to make it clear that I am going on a fact finding tour and will be interviewing students and other young people regardless of their political stripe to determine how they have been affected by the coup and the fact their country is now ruled by a military dictatorship.

The reading I have been doing in preparation for going indicates that students of all political persuasions — those who supported Popular Unity the coalition which was headed by Chile's former president, killed during the coup; those who supported the Christian Democrats, the party from which came the previous president; and students who weren't necessarily that politically involved — have been seriously affected by the coup which took place in 1973.

Foxes cute

Who really cares? So what if engineers fill their manuals with smut? Maybe that's what they like, this is, after all, a free society.

It may not seem the case, but the engineer's manual is therapeutic. Everyone knows how hard engineers work on that mathematical stuff, and, well concentrating on all those numbers makes getting a date with Annabelle K. (the girl who um, does) very hard. So they have to vent those tensions somehow. That's what the manual is for.

Getting wire-headed girls with marginal holds on reality to dance before them while they sweat, fart, and burp up beer froth can only be considered good. What you said about their queens isn't true. I've personally talked to them and they are on the same plane as that blonde on 'Three's Company'. That's pretty good all things considered.

So Mr. Marples, don't pick on engineers — you could have been one too.

Mac Vanducci
Science 1

I don't like the implication that I'm concerned solely about those students who could be termed "radical." Since the coup, one million people, out of a total population of 10 million, have been forced to leave their country. To date, 2500 people "disappeared" in the company of members of the Chilean police, and their relatives have no idea what has happened to them.

The United Nations, Canadian politicians of all political varieties, and people all over the world have expressed concern about the lack of civil and human rights in Chile. I too am very

concerned which is why I agreed to go on this fact finding tour. Being very involved in post-secondary education here in Canada, I have a particular interest in what is happening in Chilean universities and to Chilean young people.

I hope, upon my return, to be able to give Canadian students an idea of what is happening to their Chilean counterparts, and what assistance we may offer them as well.

Lake Sagaris
Executive Officer
Federation of Alberta Students

Queens prestigious

I would like to set "Mr.(?) started out as a university event. Marples straight on a few of the facts of life. The "inane drivel" of the Engineering Handbook is not "designed to attract potential recruits to the faculty," rather it is an explanation to the first year engineering students of the many facets of the faculty. Besides the articles on our events, the handbook also supplies a lot of information on the various clubs, employment programs, and academic and financial matters. It is obvious that Marples was staring at the photographs with a "boorish, retrogressive and offensive attitude" because that is the only possible way he could have missed those articles.

Another thing he has to learn about is the Queen Ball. The Queen Ball is probably one of the best events held by a campus organization all year. Aside from the Iron Ring Ceremony for graduating students, the Queen Ball reigns supreme as the most important and prestigious event in the Engineering faculty. If Marples will raise his head and actually inquire about the Queen Ball, I think he would be very surprised. The Queen Ball is a formal dinner and dance held after Engineering Week in which our Queen is crowned and trophies are handed out. As for it being a "sex-object display," Marples obviously doesn't know what the hell he's talking about. The picking of a Queen originally

Over the years, the other faculties dropped out (probably from lack of enthusiasm) and Queen Week became an exclusively Engineering event. I feel that engineers should not be put down because of other faculties' apathy but rather should be praised for keeping up a university tradition.

Now that he has the facts, I hope Marples will realize his errors. Engineering Week is not just for the "red-neck fringe" but rather for the whole campus, and I feel it is time that everyone understood this.

Edward Spetter
Civ. E. 4

It's apolitical

Regarding your recent editorial, I feel that there is a point which should be dealt with. The Refugee Committee sees itself as an apolitical organization under the auspices of the Students' Union. We, as a committee are not concerned with the political situation of Vietnam, or the political ramifications of the refugee migration to Canada, but rather with what aid we can give to the boat people. Adopting a family is a humanitarian act, not a political gesture. It is to be hoped that the students of this university realize what our intentions really are.

S.U. Refugee Committee

The girls love it!

Being in fourth year, the opinion of Mr. Marples is nothing new to me. Everyone is so concerned about Engineering Week, the sexist attitudes of engineers, and the way they exploit women (specifically the princesses and kickline members).

I have often wondered if anyone has thought to ask these women what they feel. Having been involved in engineering week for four years, I have not heard any complaints from any princess or kickline member. In fact, anyone I have spoken to has been very enthusiastic and claimed to have had a good time — no one mentioned being "manipulated" or being treated as a sex object.

Mr. Marples and others should not be so concerned with what the engineers do, but should redirect their attention to the apathy prevalent in most other faculties.

Bonnie Oxamitny
Civil Eng. 4

LETTERS

Letters to the *Gateway* should be a maximum of 250 words on any subject. Letters must be signed and should include faculty, year and phone number. Anonymous letters will not be published. All letters must be typed. We reserve the right to edit for libel and length.

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