

Forum

Election thoughts

If you're feeling unsure about this week's Students' Union election, welcome to the club. It is kind of mysterious how a bunch of politicians and pranksters pop out of the woodwork and seem to thrust this election thing up on us.

However, anyone who took a closer look at the mechanism we have for student elections at the U of A would see that this fragile and imperfect system to elect SU executives really gives any interested student a chance to run.

All candidates, whether from a serious slate, joke slate, or an independent, get \$550 to spend on their campaigns. That is also their spending limit, i.e. you can't use outside funds to make your appearance stronger than that of other candidates.

The SU hands out the \$550 as the candidate runs up expenses. The money is not simply handed over to the candidate for wanton spending. The Chief Returning Officer authorizes and pays for bills greater than \$100. So, if Captain Kirk wants to print \$110 worth of posters, he approaches the CRO, gets her OK, and she grants Kirk the \$110.

At first I was opposed to the idea of giving student money to joke candidates. However, if there were no such entrants, would most of us have noticed the election at all? The Trekkies and Yamadechoomes help put the "serious" candidates into perspective. It's just too bad that two of this election's four slates are not serious about winning.

Speaking of slates, I wonder why there aren't more independent candidates running. Why run a slate? This year's CRO told me she wonders if slates in general attract voters. I wonder too. Do slates discourage voting? Last year only 5300 students voted, and five slates were vying for the executive at that time.

Finally, what does that person called CRO do? Well, a good CRO can make the difference between a well-run election and a bust. She screens all campaign literature before it is printed, authorizes candidates' expenses, runs the election forum in SUB, and recommends changes to the SU constitution on elections, to name a few things.

It is scary to think that up until last year, it was up to the CRO and her staff to count the votes. Two years ago poor management led to two recounts and much bitterness among the CRO's crew. Now an accounting firm is paid to tabulate the results.

It is little oversights like these that leave our yearly student election in a vulnerable position. The system is very much a compromise, and it is up to concerned and informed students to get involved. Only you can improve the system. So, the next time you ignore these two weeks of electioneering and walk by those ballot boxes, remember that it will take that much longer for our system to gain credibility and generate widespread student involvement. Inform yourself and vote.

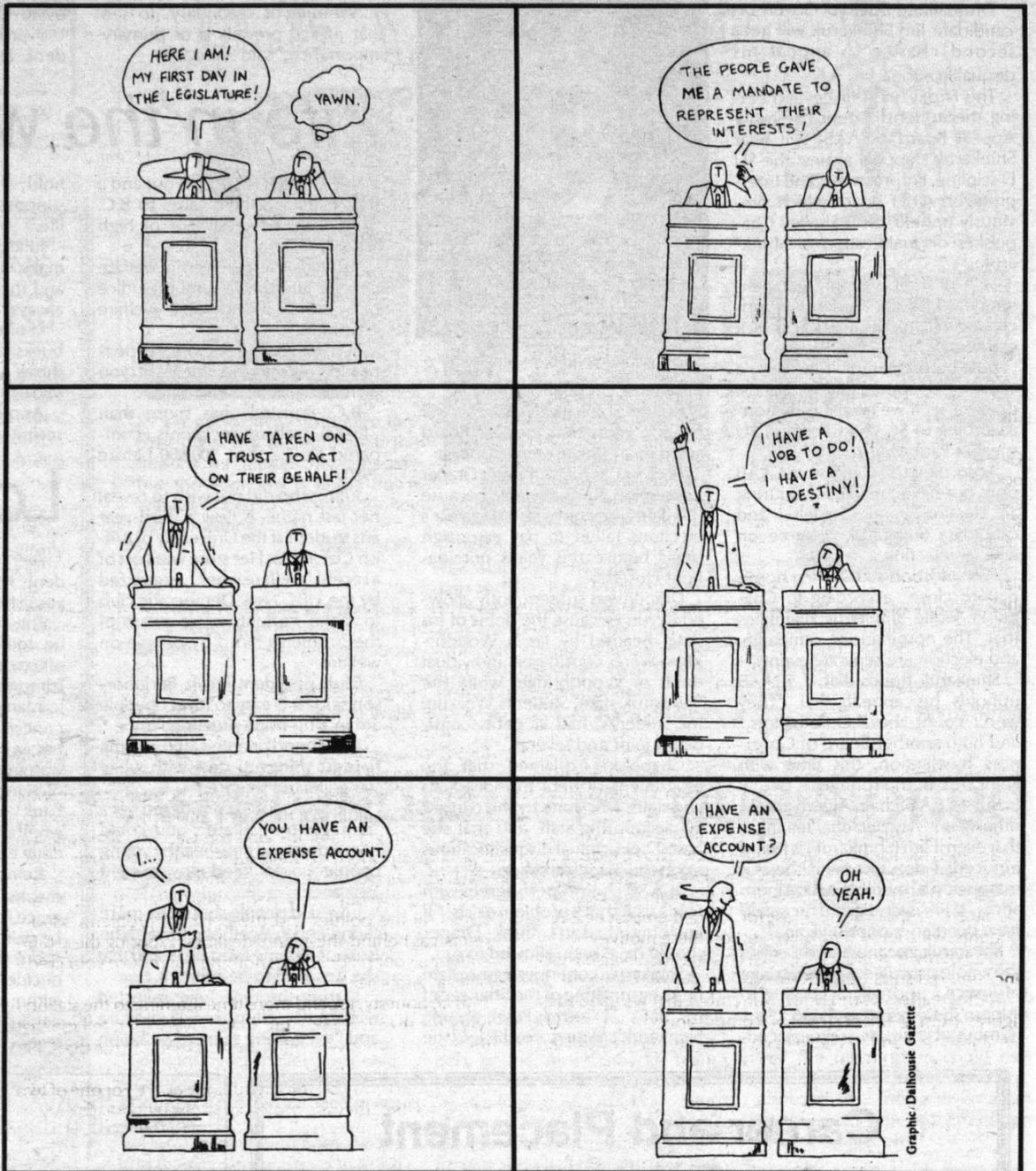
Greg Halinda

The Gateway

The Gateway is the newspaper of the University of Alberta students. Contents are the responsibility of the Editor-in-Chief. All opinions are signed by the writer and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Gateway. News copy deadlines are 12 noon Mondays and Wednesdays. Newsroom: Rm 282 (ph. 432-5168). Advertising: Rm 256D (ph. 432-4241). Students' Union Building, U of A, Edmonton, Alberta, T6C 2G7. Readership is 25,000. The Gateway is a member of Canadian University Press.

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"Snakes! I hate snakes!" howled Indiana Smathers as he hung head first over the cobra pit. His trusty sidekicks Dragos Ruiu and Alan Small bravely attacked the evil Ken Bosman with pointed sticks, as the captives Emma Sadgrove and Brad Johnson threw Cheerios. Sandra Petersen and Roberta Franchuk kept the Nazi commandos at bay with their trusty bullwhips, while Jerome Rykborst did his part by shouting "Your mother wears army boots." A huge boulder chased Melissa Screation and Marc Simao through the caverns, and Alex Shetsen frantically stomped spiders. "Such violence!" exclaimed Lisa Hall, Dan Skinner and Carolyn Aney as they turned the channel to Stampede wrestling.



Letters...

Questions re: Think

To the Editor:

After reading Tuesday March 10 Gateway, a number of questions came to mind: Has the Gateway become the official sponsor against the THINK slate in the upcoming Students' Union elections? Does John Watson's one-sided editorial directly reflect the large number of letters against the THINK slate? How do we know that Mr. John Watson does not have any personal interests in the election? Finally, how can our newspaper obviously support the destruction of one of the slates running in the election?

George Anderson

Accuracy is not censorship

To the Editor:

RE: Political Censorship

It is the responsibility of someone who alleges that a person is incompetent at his/her job, that the person be sure of their facts.

Mr. Eymann, no one is more concerned about political censorship than I, the Chief Returning Officer.

Mr. Hodgins assured me that all the information in his pamphlets and literature was factually accurate. However, the following statements were proven to be false and required to be withdrawn:

- 1) that the SU surplus of \$490,000 had been blown (it is now \$1½ million).
- 2) that while Floyd was president, a debt of \$1,000,000 was retired (the debt was cleared before he came into office).
- 3) that the government has refused to put the \$15 million savings of the new remission plan back into the Student Finance program (the disposition of the funds has yet to be decided).

The THINK Slate is free to do whatever creative account-

ing they wish. They can subtract the price of rice in China from RATT revenues, AS LONG AS THEY LABEL THEIR FIGURES AS SUCH. The slate was required to make it clear that they were using their own assumptions about rent and administration costs. These figures cannot be classed as capital improvements.

It is my duty as CRO to ensure that campaign literature is not factually inaccurate or grossly misrepresentative. Most students do not easily have access to information to know that this literature is false. The duty is upon the candidate to debate the political issues, as long as their facts are true.

Shelley Chapelski
 Chief Returning Officer

Give me a little credit!

To the Editor:

Well, now we know who Barb Higgin isn't voting for. Ms. Higgin seems to suggest that the V.P. Internal is unable to lobby the University and get innovative projects accomplished. Has Barb ever thought of covering the floor in the Butterdome? Does she realize Abby Hoffman did not appear here but in Red Deer to a crowd of hundreds? I have not stated that any of my proposed projects are going to be easy to accomplish. I expect that it will take many, many hours of hard work. My belief is that Barb is upset because I challenged her and the rest of the executive this past year on issues, such as their pay increases.

Also, if the students want to know why I refused to talk to the Gateway it was because every time I have dealt with them in the past they have either misquoted or misrepresented me.

Danny Beauchamp

Is the Gateway paranoid?

To the Editor:

It appears to me that Mr. John Watson has something to fear if the THINK slate wins this election. Why else the myopic diatribe disguised as an editorial in the last Gateway?

SU executives can be visible if the individuals involved have the courage to buck the system. One of the big problems in Canada today is that no one stands up for something

Letters to the Editor should not be more than 250 words in length. They must include your signature, faculty, year of program, I.D. number, and phone number. We reserve the right to edit for libel and length. Letters do not necessarily reflect the view of The Gateway.