

# The Gateway

member of the canadian university press

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**STAFF THIS ISSUE**—Despite the disappearance of Joe Czajkowski in Winnipeg, the paper managed to be put to bed without him. Internal conflict reigned over who gets what ads and who gets how many pages and howcum the Tampax ad is still put on the sports pages. The staff still speaking to one another are: Dick Nimmons, Opey, Phil (he got his fencing story in the end) Lenko, Phil Hinman, Terry Pettit, Cathy Morris, Ron (paranoid) Dutton, and Bill Pasnak (who protests three sports pages too). Judy (I should have stayed home) Samoil, Bob (who's going to Victoria) Anderson, Alisa (who isn't going but wishes she was, she's coming instead) Lendrum, and Jim (he's either coming from or going to the Corona) McCormick and your ever faithful, stick to it for the last six press nights Harvey G. Thomgirt.

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THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 13, 1969

## A high school guide to university student government

By PETER BOOTHROYD

Several weeks ago, relationships between students and Alberta's native people was forced to the attention of Students' Council. Three native Company of Young Canadians workers in Northern Alberta had been arrested in what they considered to be a questionable way and they had asked Council for financial help in getting the services of a lawyer. The Students for a Democratic University and the Student Christian Movement raised several hundred dollars, and then approached Students' Council for a grant of another \$100. This was granted. But the next week, the same Council decided to reconsider the matter because further information had come to their attention from some unknown source. Finally, on the third week, the grant was given. A number of councillors felt that the money should be given directly to the lawyers, but in the end the \$100 was properly given to the Indians' own Native Peoples' Defence Fund.

This incident is a good jumping off point for a discussion of the student's role in society. In the situation we quickly can see that:

- most of the student councillors are basically humanitarian;

- most of the student councillors were confused about the real issue in the case, namely, the right of all citizens to adequate legal defence whatever the nature of the purported crime;

- many of the councillors are humanitarian, but paternalistically so—Council had to check out the report of the Indians; and what was worse, Council seriously considered giving the money directly to the lawyer instead of allowing the people to use the money in the way they saw best;

- most of the councillors have no clear opinion on the nature of the proper relationship between students and the community—decisions are made on an *ad hoc* basis and in confusion about the principles at stake.

The point here is not to make another attack on Students' Council. It is rather to show why it is necessary that students — all students — develop a theory about their role in society. It has to be a theory that enables the elected Council to act intelligently when issues such as an emergency appeal for funds from non-students comes before it. Leaving such requests to *ad hoc* decision-making is not good enough as the incident with the Native Peoples' Defence Fund clearly shows.

It is consistent that a Students' Council, which has no principles on which to base decisions about community relations, should as a group reject the Canadian Union of Students. CUS now operates on the basis of conscious political principles, and consequently is developing an effectiveness that our Council

will never have. At least not so long as Council refuses to think about its long-term relations to society—that is, to think politically.

Because of the high schools which regard politics as something dirty and therefore to be indulged only in private, university students are reluctant to support a politically principled Council.

The problem is that it is impossible for a Students' Council not to be political. The question is: will the Council be political in a confused and unprincipled way as ours is, or will it work on the basis of a conscious and continuously developing philosophy as CUS does.

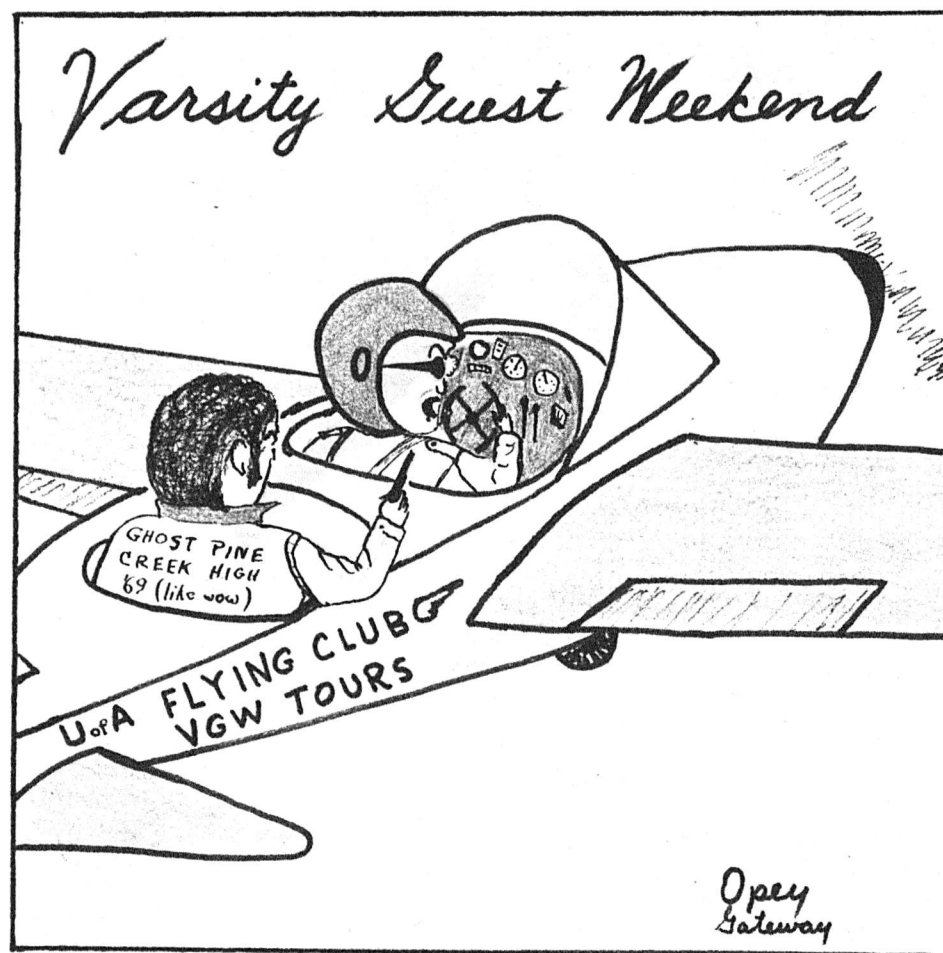
By rejecting CUS in the recent referendum, the present students of this university have made their choice. It is a choice, however, which is always open.

In my opinion, growing numbers of future students will reject a student government which is deballed because it is confused. And because of the humanitarian instincts which are increasingly being formulated which recognize the student's responsibility to the underdogs in our society.

Instead of \$100, \$1,000 will be granted to the Defence Fund. And instead of sitting back with a sigh of relief because a tricky issue has been handled and money given, future Councils will want to know what else they can do. Instead of worrying that the Indians might not be able to handle the money themselves, support will be given on the assumption that native leaders are quite capable of making correct decisions. And when it comes to the crunch, and there is a choice between keeping the businessman's image of the student as a "responsible" career-minded bundle of collegiate joy or supporting the poor in demonstrations, the Council will lead the students in the only course open to the true humanitarian. Because, humanitarianism without political action is phony. And political action without political thought is fruitless.

It is no longer necessary to argue that students as a group should be involved in the larger society. Even U of A's Students' Council with their action on the Native Peoples' Defence Fund, and in other more subtle ways, have shown how necessary and desirable such involvement is. The argument at this university is now between those who want students to become involved in a thoughtful and political way, and those who think students can continue their hazard forays into community affairs.

This is the argument which concerns all of us, students or not. To avoid the argument is to support the status quo, in student politics. To me, that seems contrary to the interests of the majority of all citizens.



"Take you to where??"

### Editorial

## Council isn't representative

**"As education representative on students' council, my vote speaks for 2,991 students. Yet rehabilitation medicine has one vote although that school has just 90 students or roughly three per cent of the number of students in education. Why should education students show any interest in student government when they are so grossly discriminated against?"**

—Dale Enarson  
Education, rep  
Students' Council  
1966-67

Dale Enarson wrote those lines in the Nov. 16, 1966 issue of The Gateway. The situation was such on the students' council in 1966 and the years before that also. What Mr. Enarson is saying is that the students' council flagrantly violates one of the oldest democratic principles of all time—that of representation by population.

The federal government had problems of this sort several years back but they overhauled the constituencies of the country in order to make the House of Commons more representative-by population. The Social Credit government in this province is currently thinking about the same thing.

Student government here has a much simpler problem—they have but 15,000 students to deal with but the university is getting larger and larger almost by the minute. And there still hasn't been any change in the moth-eaten system.

The Canadian Union of Students saw this flaw in their system and instituted a weighted-vote system whereby universities were allotted votes according to their enrollment. Any school could call for the weighted vote prior to any decision-making.

This university has called CUS "unrepresentative" but we are in a case much worse.

A reorganization committee has been working this year, and the last and the last to change the system. The sum total of their work seems to be the splitting of the students' union vice-president's chores into two areas—external vice-president and academic vice-president—both to be elected on a campus-wide basis. And though the two positions have been listed on official election notices, the bill still hasn't received third and final reading from council.

Weighted voting may be one way of cracking the sterile representation-by-faculty system we now operate under. But we think there are other better ones.

The most simple system—and a student government almost rendered irrelevant should concerned with simplicity — would be to have a number of candidates run a campus-wide election. Of the candidates the 10 receiving the largest number of votes would be elected. Over and above this, an executive committee would be elected—as is at the present.

This system which is practiced by innumerable governments would ensure that the student government is representative. It would ensure that the councillors elected are the most interested students on campus (and the voter would back this as he cast his ballot for an involved representative).

To our way of thinking, there is little benefit in special interest groups on council (i.e., faculties, athletic boards, fraternities). Seldom has an issue been presented to council which required specialized knowledge from a councillor from any particular faculty.