

“Right to work”

The advertisements which have been appearing in newspapers and magazines recently, advocating “right to work” legislation, are deceptive in the extreme.

The ads advocate abolition of closed shop agreements. Freedom, they cry. Workers ought not to be coerced into joining trade unions.

This sort of argument should be recognized for what it really is — an attack on both union structure and the gains which trade unions have thus far obtained for their members.

At present there are three sorts of arrangements with unions that could in some sense be thought of as closed shop. Actual closed shop is the commonest among the building trades, and is typified by the situation in which a potential worker must belong to the union before an employer is allowed to hire him. Union shop is the situation in which an employer can hire anyone, but that person is then required to join the union. This type of arrangement is commonest in industry, where a plant is organized as a whole and not by trades.

Finally, there is the Rand formula, in which a worker must pay union dues, but need not belong to the union. This system was implemented for those people who object to belonging to a union for religious or other grounds.

The “right to work” gang would seek legislation which would disallow all three types of collective agreement.

On the face of it, it may seem reasonable to allow workers the freedom to belong or not to belong to a union. An open shop agreement, however, allows people who contribute nothing to the union and in fact often run it down at every opportunity, to benefit from union-negotiated settlements. It is, in essence, freeloading on the time, money, and energy of fellow workers who do support the union.

Worse than this, however, is the obvious way in which open shop agreements play into the hands of the employers. Under open shop agreements, management is free to hire whomever they wish and to deal with them as individuals.

This defeats the entire purpose of the trade union movement. Individual workers are powerless against companies and government, but in their unions, together, they are heard, and they win gains for themselves and their brothers and sisters in their own and other unions. This is the dream and the goal of trade unionists everywhere, and it is under the attack of a group of corporation-backed “freedom” advocates.

In the United States, “right to work” legislation in the twenty states where it exists has seriously affected living standards of the workers in the states concerned. Weekly wages are over thirteen per cent lower in “right to work” states.

It is certainly in the interests of the corporate bosses to support “right to work” legislation. It will drive down wages and provide a pool of low-priced labor. For the same reasons, it is obviously not in the interests of the workers of Alberta.

As Alberta Federation of Labour president Harry Kostiuk says, “He (the “right to work” organizer) is an employer working on behalf of employers who stand to benefit in a substantial way if such American anti-union shop laws and the problems they create are dumped upon Albertans.”

Let’s not be fooled by such self-serving “freedom” rhetoric.

Alison Thomson

the Gateway

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STAFF THIS ISSUE: From the faceoff, Jim McElgunn gets it over to Shaune Impey, who fires it into the corner. Terry Jonestown and Peter Michalyshyn collide in the corner as they try and tie it up there. Nina Miller comes in now, and gives John Savard a bit of stick in the cheek. Oh no, now David Marples is in there, jostling with Russ Sampson... omigod, the benches are clearing! Marni Stanley grabs Maxine Murphy and absolutely hammers her to the ice! Brad Keith has Barb Horricks in a punishing headlock and is receiving devastating lefts and rights to the face from Mike McKinney. Margaret Donovan has pulled off Hollis Brown’s helmet and is pulling his hair! My God, Ken, they’re gonna have to get the police in here! It’s absolute pandemonium! I’ve never seen anything like it! Now Sather is on the ice, he’s going after Ruel with a stick! Semenka has left the penalty box! Damn it, Ken, I’m going down there too!

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Fee increase not for frills

The editorial “Money Talks,” without doubt, warrants response. In addition to being misleading, some of the comments are not entirely accurate. We feel that it is grossly unfair to, in any way, compare the referenda questions with the recently announced tuition increase. It must be pointed out that where Students’ Union fees are concerned, students have the right to voice their concerns (by casting a ballot), and should Students’ Union fees be raised, we can say where that money would be going (and it is not just to include general operating revenue).

The editorial also suggests that all of our long-range plans involve growth and expansion of our business-bureaucratic component. Certainly most any development can be described as growth. However, we are not proposing to increase this business-bureaucratic component. It is on this point that presumably we agree; there is no need to expand this component but simply to reorganize it.

As for the description of some of our projects as “luxuries,” again we beg to differ. Using existing space and resources more efficiently, in our minds, is not a “frill,” but rather pragmatic.

It is not true that by instituting the SUB development proposals, money that could go into club funding or the anti-cutbacks campaign would be diverted. Quite the contrary, for if capital expenditures were diverted from general operating revenue (which is where any money for these costs comes now) to a separate account (i.e. the Students’ Union Building development fund), we would have more money to put into club funding, the anti-cutbacks campaign, faculty association grants, and so on. It should also be noted that by setting up such a fund, with a reasonable amount of money in it, the Students’ Union can facilitate its long-term planning.

Movie hard to beat

To say that *All That Jazz* is a “silly movie” because the Joe Gideon character “is so irritatingly offensive as a human being that frankly I don’t give a damn about his demise” — as your reviewer does — is like saying that Macbeth’s demise is uninteresting because he was such a murderous son-of-a-bitch. Who cares who Joe Gideon demised? Surely the question is how he comes down, no? (And, good grief, who’s Bob Fosse? Does it matter?)

The dawning of death in Joe’s consciousness is a nerve-scraping cave-in of his voyeur’s sensibilities. The dancing lovelies and bedroom charades are traded in for a long moment of stock-taking when pettyness and aesthetic banality are purged by the marvellous invention of making flashbacks work like flash-aheads. His final end stands out like a black hole. For sheer propulsion this movie is hard to beat.

U. I. A. Neumann
Grad Studies

In reference to Mr. Turtle’s concerns about guarantees, we, too, have had a similar concern and have therefore set up the terms of reference for the fund such that, 1) an extensive set of checks and balances on spending the money are included; 2) only by referenda may these funds be diverted; and 3) the fund would be set up in isolation of our current operating account.

As far as the existing proviso for the Building Reserve Fund is concerned, this fund never really existed due to the HUB situation. That is, almost all moneys were diverted to cover HUB costs and then to offset the

general financial drain experienced by the Students’ Union due to HUB. If Students’ Council were to ever consider another “HUB” again, only by referenda could these funds be diverted to such a project.

Anyone requesting more detail or proof of guarantee, including Mr. Turtle, is welcome to come by Room 259 SUB (or phone 432-4236) any time to have their questions answered.

Sharon Bell
Vice-President (internal)
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Quixote

by David
Marples

Every time I see crowds of white-faced students huddled in front of the elevators in Tory, their eyes betraying a succession of sleepless nights of cramming for mid-terms, I question the usefulness and validity of examinations. The University, which purports to be a body of higher learning, organizes its curriculum in such a way that on two occasions per term, students are expected to absorb facts like well-trained parrots and then spew them back out on to examination booklets in the shortest possible time. There then follows an equally nerve-racking interlude, in which the students’ future hangs on the examiner’s red pen.

To those who believe that the examination system is the most satisfactory method of measuring abilities, let me point out the following. First, an examination takes no account of a student’s mental or physical health on a given day, unless of course the student feels so unwell that he/she is obliged to leave the room. It is thus a system of “sudden death” *par excellence*. Second, most examinations do not cover the set course. Instead they encompass fragments of it. The very fact that the student is compelled to remember a few specific data precludes a broader knowledge of the subject in question.

The assessment of examination papers, in any University, is notoriously unreliable. I would not be so rash as to suggest that a student’s grade might be improved by the appearance of a large steak on the supper table when a weary professor arrives home from school. It is clear however, that grading is subjective. Two professors or (as seems more likely) a professor and a Teaching Assistant, are unlikely to give the same grade to the same paper. Similarly, if the student should sit two very different examinations on the same scholastic subject, the results are also likely to show discrepancies.

Thus the student is reliant upon the whims of his/her professor. This can work well when, as was the case recently with a Faculty of Arts professor (who deserves to remain nameless), the examiner manages to lose all the grades and the students are asked to hand in their own marks. Usually however, the graduating student enters society with his examination grades imprinted on his mind, since it is these which will predetermine his suitability for employment. I can think of few greater misconceptions amongst employers than the viewpoint that a collection of grade nine examination results automatically renders a candidate a fitting prospect for the job market.

My limited experience notwithstanding, I am in no doubt that most students would like to produce work of a high quality. Moreover, I have few qualms about stating that the examination system, a highly fallible and unstable institution, does not allow them (us) to do this. It negates creativity, originality, wide learning and most significantly, the incentive to take an interest in a subject and peruse it in any depth. I would, frankly, be happy to see it exposed as the outdated and obsolete anachronism it is and removed from the fabric of academic life.

I should not confine myself to destructive criticism. Since the motivation of a student to a subject is dependent, to a large extent, upon the course tutor, it should not be over-optimistic to hope for a system of evaluation which would allow a constant feedback between students and staff. The assessment would entail the measurement of a student’s understanding of a clearly-defined subject and simultaneously would allow the tutor to assess the successfulness of his own teaching methods. Each Faculty could devise its own method for monitoring a student’s performance, with the proviso that quasi-examination pressure should be ruled out.

Such an alternative might make University something more than an unremitting treadmill for many students.