

Vice-president cuts

from C-1

We have never accused students of being apathetic. Students are not apathetic—they merely have a variety of interests. Just because every student doesn't support every program and policy of the students' union doesn't mean students are apathetic. They have every right to choose what they want to support and participate in.

The students' union provides programs of interest to the greatest number of students; it provides opportunities for small groups to pursue specialized interests; and it represents majority opinions as closely as it can through the representation by faculty and school on students' council.

I feel that this system is far from adequate—that the structure needs an overhaul to accommodate it to the ever-increasing size of the university and of the demands made upon it. But if the union is irrelevant to some, it is much more relevant than the CIA can ever hope to be because at least it is elected by the students as a whole, not self-appointed as is the CIA.

I am actually very pleased to see the interest and concern about the

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university and the students within it which has developed among these few students who are involved in the CIA. However, these so-called "student activists" need not think they have the corner on concern.

The students' executive and council is grappling with a spectrum of student problems and concerns. However, the four-member executive and the council of the students' union cannot be expected to do everything on this campus. Hundreds of other students make important contributions across the campus to present programs and opportunities for other students to learn, to develop, to enjoy themselves.

Responsibilities are delegated to other groups, and we encourage groups of students and individuals to develop programs and initiate ideas. This year, response from the general student body has been greater than usual. We assert that this indicates we are providing the atmosphere and opportunity conducive to this development.

We have been accused, by such people as those in the CIA, by Brian Campbell whose articles generally occupy these spaces, and some others who form part of the so-called "activist" group on the campus, of abdicating our responsibilities, of not providing leadership, or of not "politicizing" the campus (if indeed such a word exists).

However, these people would do well to sit back and consider how much more the campus is "politicized" this year than it has been in the past. The U of A students' council, and more particularly the executive, and most particularly the president, has initiated, not only at U of A but across the nation, an examination of the role of the student in society and the role of student government.

The people who criticize us may disagree with our policy, but they certainly cannot charge that we have failed to "politicize" the campus. We have brought controversy and policy making into student government, and we have given the "student left" an opportunity, a

motivation, to express their views, and a focus on which to direct their attention.

What else has the council, and more particularly the executive, done this year besides stirring up controversy? Few people know that executive members spend, on the average, an absolute minimum of four or five hours per day (and sometimes much more) on students' union business. The activists have charged us with being petty bureaucrats, but we do more than administer a budget.

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The editorial in the Nov. 25 edition of The Gateway asked why "student activists" didn't enmesh themselves in the student government. Because they prefer to deal only with ideas; they think the administration of the students' union is either beneath them or beyond them. It takes a great deal of specialized and sophisticated knowledge to administer a corporation with assets of \$250,000 on volunteer labour while carrying ten law courses (Schepanovich), six arts courses (Pilkington), fourth year commerce (Anderson) or a full year of education (Sinclair). The student "activists" couldn't be bothered with the policies and work which are bureaucratic, yes, but are also the foundation of the student activities, programs, and representations developed by and involving students on this campus.

I am sure the student "activists" wouldn't care to spend several hours debating the amalgamation of the concert band and the marching band in a students' council meeting. But decisions like these are very important to many students and have to be made. It is easy to protest when you have no responsibility. It is fun to tear down students' council, but would these same people be able to effectively and responsibly carry out the functions which are expected of and demanded of student leaders?

And what do we do besides administer? The "activists" would have you think we do nothing as they work to undermine the council. But would you believe that we are undertaking freshmen orientation seminars, High School visitation programs, Indian affairs activities, academic relations programs, University government programs, and co-operative housing to name a few of the projects.

Council is aware that the student government system which has served this university well in the past is no longer entirely adequate on a campus of this size.

Since the last council, whose leaders Richard Price and Bruce Olsen are apparently active in the CIA, made no headway on most of these items, we have had to develop most of these programs from nothing. And four people cannot do it all, so we need other students to take an active interest.

However, the "activists" prefer to attempt to duplicate the programs we are already developing in an attempt to imply we are a "do-nothing" council. The "activists" have been invited to sit on these committees and to apply their energies to the tasks at hand; but

no, they prefer to carry on in splendid isolation. Then, having failed to support the programs we initiate, they assert that we are failing because we do not carry them all through ourselves.

It is not the role of student leaders to do all the work themselves. It is our purpose to co-ordinate, to catalyze, to administer, to represent, to provide responsible leadership. This we are doing, and the CIA, in their attempt to undermine the council is not working in the best interests of the students at this university.

One of the purposes of the CIA, as stated by Sue Boddington in The Gateway, is to provide "an organized voice on campus for opinion other than that of students' council". It would be well to point out that student councillors have not one voice but twenty-three.

Councillors have varying and sometimes conflicting ideas and opinions: that is why we have such long meetings. However, when a policy is discussed, only one decision can be made, not twenty-three. Although student councillors have twenty-three voices, students' council can have only one. There will always be some people who disagree with that one voice, but that is how democracy works.

The arrogance of the CIA in establishing itself as the alternative to student government, as the only group which can "politicize" the campus, the only group who cares about "politicizing" the campus, is paralleled by its intention to act as a "conscience for council". I submit The Gateway has carried out this function adequately in the past, and the CIA is calling into question not only the effectiveness of the council, but the competence of The Gateway.

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What else has the students' council done this year? We have arranged medical coverage with the MSI for students during the summer months; we have been the initiating force behind the formation of an Alberta association of students; we have brought in new kinds of programs and supported the new ideas of other students.

But the CIA would have you believe that our student government is irrelevant. If they have ideas about how this should be changed, they should join us on the reorganization committee, which is currently examining the student government system. We realize the system has weaknesses too—weaknesses, which last year's council did nothing to correct because they were too busy writing briefs to the provincial government.

We are aware that the student government system which has served this university well in the past is no longer entirely adequate on a campus of this size. But before we jump in head first, we want to examine the implications and consequences of proposed changes.

I submit that the students belonging to the CIA are abdicating their responsibilities as students and members of the students' union. They have a responsibility, just as do the student leaders, to promote programs of concern. But how many of them have volunteered their time and energy to work on the Indian affairs committee, to tutor Indian students, to help with high school visitation, to contribute to the co-operative housing program? They can't be bothered—they would rather protest.



MARILYN PILKINGTON

—Al Scarth photo

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