

SECOND WIND

The Thursday, January 24 issue of the Gateway ran an article on the Students' Council meeting of the previous Tuesday that made mention of a "heated exchange" between SU president Floyd Hodgins and Anne McGrath. In light of the coming SU election, it is worthwhile re-examining the events which led to yet another public display of intolerance, childishness and "if-you-don't-play-by-my-rules-I'll-take-my-ball-and-go-home" politics. This particular incident is representative of a number of abuses of power by certain members of the current executive and reflects the characters of those members. When casting your ballots for the '84-'85 executive, remember. Often lamentably, the people who seek election can have a profoundly detrimental effect on our education; equally lamentably, we can often hope they will be merely ineffectual. Like houseplants.

Considerable copy in early issues of this year's Gateway was dedicated to McGrath's bid to become Academic Commissioner at the U of A and her subsequent failure to obtain this position. Though her paper qualifications were exemplary, Council rejected McGrath's candidacy, as is its right. McGrath contends the reason Council overturned the nomination committee's selection of her (allegedly under the direction of Hodgins, VP Internal Gord Stamp and VP External Paul Alpern) was her affiliation with the Communist Party of Canada and not for reasons directly related to her ability to execute the duties of the office of Academic Commissioner. As the allegation of Communophobia cannot be proved without the aid of Lenin's ghost, no further discussion of the allegation will follow. However, to further complicate the Hodgins/McGrath dispute, the Committee for Impeachment, which aimed at removing the above mentioned executive members from office, was spearheaded by friends of McGrath.

Animosity between McGrath and Hodgins escalated and became increasingly personal until, in an argument over an *Edmonton Journal* article, McGrath called Hodgins (here I follow the example of Barbara Bush in campaigning for the U.S. presidency) a "(I-can'-print-that-but-it-rhymes-with-trucking) liar." Yes, really. In public. Several times. Unjustly assaulted, Hodgins called Campus Security and an investigation was launched through the apparatus of the University Disciplinary Panel which could have resulted in McGrath's expulsion from university for subjecting Hodgins to "mental indignity." And God knows she deserved it; students' sensibilities are seldom abused in such a reprehensible manner. To add insult to injury, when questioned about her reasons for making the statement by a representative of Campus Security, McGrath replied, "because he is."

Though it is beyond contention that both parties should be chastised for their actions, it is Hodgins particularly who should be reprimanded. The absurdity of his complaint, registered several days after the event actually occurred, is eloquently demonstrated by Campus Security's refusal to comment on the investigation.

In fact, it seems everyone would rather forget about it. When questioned Floyd claimed there was no story here and in fact discouraged further coverage of the incident. Displaying his concern for McGrath's future, he suggested further coverage could "jeopardize her career." McGrath is in education; everyone knows a Communist has never been hired by the A.T.A. Just ask Jim Keegstra.

That Hodgins is not pursuing the issue perhaps indicates he has realized his error. Unfortunately, this is only one incident among many by

Hodgins and others, which are an embarrassment to the rest of the student body.

Did Hodgins (and his fellow nasties) assume that his election as SU president was going to grant him immunity from public scrutiny and opposition? Did he seriously believe election was some sort of benediction? If so, then he has an amusingly erroneous conception of politics, student or otherwise. To become a public figure, as the SU president is, is to become a focus for opposition, rational or otherwise. Hodgins should have had sufficient aristocracy of character to transcend McGrath's comment. That he could not, that he was unable to leave McGrath to her emotional outbursts alone, that his complaint initiated her investigation unnecessarily, does nothing to shore up Hodgins' deteriorating reputation on campus.

Here I might add a note of practical Machiavellian advice to both Hodgins and his successors: allowing a certain measure of freedom to the opposition lends credibility to the regime. Get it?

To help bring about a revolution in Hodgins' consciousness, and that of the other candidates seeking positions on the SU in the coming election, to bring him to that state of being to which he aspires, I offer the following scenario to U of A students.

Can you imagine if one student walked into the SU offices, walked up to Hodgins and said, "Floyd, you're a (I-can'-print-that-but-it-rhymes-with-clucking) liar," and walked out? He'd probably think that person was morally degenerate and initiate an investigation into their sordid character.

And if two people, can you imagine, two people walked into the SU offices and said, in harmony, "Floyd, you're a (I-can'-print-that-but-it-rhymes-with-plucking) liar," and walked out? He'd probably think they were both sick and have them both investigated.

And if three people, yes friends, three people walked into the SU offices, said in harmony and with feeling, "Floyd, you're a (I-can'-print-that-but-it-rhymes-with-shucking) liar," and walked out, he might think it was an organization, begin to perspire on his eyelids and upper lip and glance over his shoulder at the spectre of responsibility.

And if fifty people a day, I said fifty people a day, walked into the SU offices, from now until the new executive takes over, said, together or independently, in harmony and with feeling, "Floyd, you're a (I-can'-print-that-but-it-rhymes-with-ducking) liar," and walked out, he might think it was a movement.

And friends, that is what it is.

It's the University of Alberta Movement of Students Against Social Injustice, Ignoble Behaviour and Power Abuse, Supporting Responsibility, Humility in the Execution of Public Office and Aristocratic Character. And all you gotta do to join is walk into the SU offices, walk right up to Floyd, and say...

Do you think he'll get the message?

Knowing the network which links all politically inclined students, do you think more importantly, they'll get the message?

When the SU election approaches with the dawn of the seventh and eighth of February, be wary of candidates who take themselves too seriously and their work not seriously enough.

If you must vote (and I say that with only the smallest measure of cynicism; in actuality I recommend you do, considering the possible impact the SU executive can have on your education), vote carefully and responsibly.

With thanks to Denis Vincent, Tim Sharon and Arlo Guthrie



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