

## Engineering week: An inside view

Even though Engineering Week is over, the issues concerning it are still unresolved in many people's minds. In order to get the view from both sides, those who think Engineering Week has aspects which are sexist, and those who think Engineering Week is fine the way it is, The Gateway is interviewing a representative student from each side using the identical set of questions.

The first interview is with Richard Belzil, a spokesperson for the Electrical Engineering Club who says he feels he is representative of the Engineering student body as a whole. The next interview will be with Britt Griffin, a law student and active feminist on campus.

by Nina Miller

**Gateway:** What do you think of the article that was printed in the Godiva?

**Belzil:** I have not read the article and I have no intention of doing so. It's a gross oversight by whoever is responsible. It just seems to me a gross misunderstanding of common sense in publishing. It's highly regrettable that the article was ever printed. I don't think the view of the article reflects the feeling of any engineer. The ESS has said so. It was very foolish.

**Gateway:** Do you think that somebody with the remotest sense of responsibility would print that article unless they thought it reflected to some degree the general tone of Engineering Week and would therefore be acceptable?

**Belzil:** I think they grossly misunderstood the general tone of Engineering Week if they had. Queen Week is not based on any kind of violence of that sort. I think anyone with the remotest semblance of common sense would see that it is unpublishable material. It has no reflection on Engineering Week at all.

**Gateway:** What is your definition of sexism?

**Belzil:** Sexism is to discriminate against women in an employment situation. It is to let the fact that an applicant is a woman enter into judgment and consideration for a position. Sexism occurs primarily in the job context.

**Gateway:** What do you think it means to call someone sexist?

**Belzil:** I think it is a very strong term. It's analogous to calling a public figure a homosexual — it's a very serious accusation. It just does not apply to the Engineering Week context.

**Gateway:** Do you think parts of Engineering Week are sexist? If so, why, and if not, why not? Sculptures?

**Belzil:** No, they are purely political.

**Gateway:** Engineering songs — for example, the Godiva song.

**Belzil:** Godiva is a very old song; whether it is sexist — I would say no. I think it has come down to a song and nothing more.

**Gateway:** Why? Isn't it sexist?

**Belzil:** Its lyrics are, if you take them to heart, but I don't think anyone takes them to heart. I know we certainly don't.

**Gateway:** Godiva Engineering Week paper?

**Belzil:** I managed to get through Engineering Week without reading it.

**Gateway:** Well, that's O.K., because I have a copy here. (He looks the paper over.)

**Belzil:** I do think it is funny, with the exception of the one article in question. No, I don't think it's sexist.

**Gateway:** What about the playboy-brand jokes and cartoons?

**Belzil:** I don't think there is anything sexist about them — sexism is a very strong word.

**Gateway:** Kicklines?

**Belzil:** Definitely not. I think that you cannot get away from this in an environment which is predominantly male. Men will be men and women will be women; the men are going to get together and have what in the past has been called a wholesale meat show. Call it what you will — we don't think it's harmful. You stare at men, you stare at women, it's just this is a little more organized.

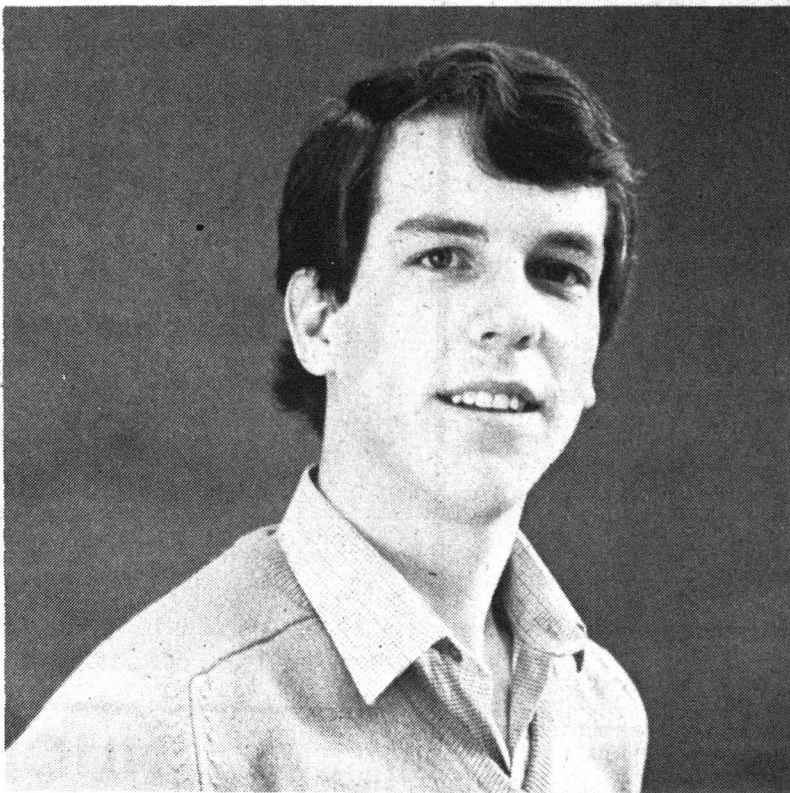
**Gateway:** The Queen contest?

**Belzil:** It is the same thing — definitely not sexist. Sexism is a much stronger word than that.

**Gateway:** Is the Queen contest more than a beauty contest?

**Belzil:** Well, I think not. They also judge them on poise and grace. I think that is a part of beauty, myself.

**Gateway:** How do you relate this



Richard Belzil, electrical engineering student, gives his opinions on Engineering Week.

to whether or not the contest is sexist? Do you think this is tied to the way women's role is perceived by society?

**Belzil:** No; in order to be tied to sexism there would have to be a lot more at stake than just winning the contest. You'd have to blatantly say you are going to judge these women on the basis of their academic standing and their capability to perform certain tasks and then turn around and judge them on their beauty only. That is sexism. But from the beginning we have stated this is only a beauty contest and that is all it is.

**Gateway:** Do you think the Queen Contest contributes to women's role as perceived by society?

**Belzil:** I think queen contests in their present-day form could go on in a society where men and women are equal.

**Gateway:** Do you favor equal rights for women?

**Belzil:** Oh certainly, ultimately.

**Gateway:** What does favoring equal rights mean to you?

**Belzil:** It means to have the same opportunities as women. I'd expect to have half of my

superiors as women and half of my employees as women. This is equality for me in the work world. I don't honestly think it will be like this by the time I graduate, but it is something to be sought.

**Gateway:** Are you actively seeking it?

**Belzil:** I'm just actively trying to graduate.

**Gateway:** Why do you think the ratio of women in engineering is not increasing at the same rate as other faculties, for example law and medicine?

**Belzil:** Women are not encouraged to become engineers ever since the time they are very young. I think it's because they are not encouraged to build things or help their dad in the garage and such. They're not encouraged to be innovative with real materials in that way, they are encouraged at that age to play with dolls. But, as a woman, you'd know that better than I. They are not encouraged to build, which is basically what an engineer does.

**Gateway:** Do you think the general attitude among the engineering students towards

women is conducive to increasing the ratio of women in the faculty?

**Belzil:** I don't think we should artificially increase the ratio of women in the faculty through special quotas. But as far as attitudes go, they have nothing to do with Queen Week, or the ESS handbook. Generally people are indifferent. If the women want to be engineers, they are perfectly welcome. I've never seen anything but welcome. The fact that they don't want to be engineers is outside our sphere of influence. It is not that we are discouraging them; it's that we have little say in who comes into the faculty anyhow. We don't worry about women coming into the faculty. We're perfectly open-minded about that.

**Gateway:** Do you think the current attitude of engineers towards women is perpetuating the role of women as second class citizens in our society?

**Belzil:** Oh certainly not. I think the attitudes of engineers towards women is very good on a professional level.

**Gateway:** But as students, given your attitudes towards Queen Week?

**Belzil:** Given the Engineering Queen situation and such, it makes little difference once we begin to behave as professionals in the real world. It doesn't matter how we look at women during Queen Week; what it really comes down to is the brass tacks of employment. We see women as being the same as men in engineering, regardless of what happens in Queen Week. If you put it in the light of the real world, I think we are prime examples of the people who are anti-sexist in our opinion of women in the working world.

**Gateway:** Why do you think so many people outside the faculty are upset by Engineering Week?

**Belzil:** I think it's an overreaction of what they obviously conceive as sexism. I don't know if I were outside the faculty whether I would act the same. Sexism is an awful thing to start yelling at people because it has a very deep meaning and we see it as being much deeper than what we're being accused of. The reason these people are mad is because they see us as being sexist and I think they're mistaken.



**THE STUDENTS' UNION**  
requires a  
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The Editor-in-Chief shall:

- be responsible for supervising all aspects of the editing and producing of the Gateway.
- use his or her discretion as to what material is published in the Gateway.
- submit the annual budget for the Gateway to the Administration Board in compliance with By-law 700.
- ensure the smooth operation of the Students' Union newspaper.

**Salary:** \$500 per month

**For further information, please contact:**

Keith Krause, Editor-in-Chief, Gateway, at 432-5168, or in Room 282 Students' Union Building.

**Deadline for Applications:**

28 January 1981, 4:00 PM to Room 259 SUB



The University of Alberta  
Office of the Registrar  
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## University Orientation Days February 26 & 27, 1981

How Can You Participate?

During Reading Week this year the University's faculties, departments and students organizations will be hosting two days of presentations, displays and special events for high school students, guidance counsellors and interested parents from all over Alberta. Participants have been invited from all of the Province's high schools, and University Orientation Days are designed to give those involved a better understanding of a university education; from academic programs and admission requirements to clubs and athletics, from fees and studying to housing and social activities. The objective is to help those who will soon have to make serious decisions regarding careers and post-secondary education gather much of the information they will need to do it properly.

In order to make University Orientation Days 1981 a success several students will be required both February 26 and 27 to act as tour guides, man information booths around campus and assist with equipment set-up. Students will also be required throughout February to help assemble information packets and to do preliminary organizational work. Those who volunteer will earn the University's basic hourly wage of \$4.35 an hour. In addition, those working February 26 and/or 27 will also be provided with lunch each day.

If you would like to work at University Orientation Days, please drop by or call our office (between 11:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m.), at the address or number below and ask for Julia or Kathy. You may volunteer to work both days, one or any portion of one day February 26 and 27. (preference will be given to those who volunteer to work full-time both days). Or you may volunteer to work a few hours in February assembling information packets. Students selected to act as tour guides or information assistants will be required to attend a three-hour training workshop either Sunday, February 8 from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m., or Wednesday, February 11 from 7:00 to 10:00 p.m. (Please indicate your choice of workshops when applying.)

Please direct your inquiries or applications to:

University Orientation Days  
Office of the Registrar  
Room 128 Administration Building

Phone: 432-5088