

Everyone defends Meekison

Sir:

It seems incredible to me as a new faculty member without experience with your paper, that your issue of November 25th has gone to press including the story, without a by-line, "Distorted Credentials Inspire Questions," (page 7)

Having edited a university paper myself, I am well aware of the judgements which must be exercised in discarding (re-writing) the merely incompetent, rejecting the slanderous, authenticating 'facts', deflecting rumours, and lending an ear to the disenchanted of the community. It is apparent that Mr. Winston Gereluk's writing must keep you busy.

What significant news facts are broken in this story? There is nothing 'hard' at all; the crusading reporter has uncovered a duplicate blunder in a release from the university's public relations people. Hence we are fully informed that Dr. J. P. Meekison was only acting chairman of Political Science (one must assume that the chores were full time) and has only edited (not written) the book *Canadian Federalism: Myth or Reality* (which, by the way, was incorrectly titled by your precision-minded team, *Canadian Federation*). The capabilities of P.R. people (is the U of A office staffed with ex-Gateway workers?) with respect to accuracy are universally acknowledged; to launch a personal vendetta on the basis of the mistakes of their office establishes a very weak home base indeed.

For the record let me note that Meekison's book (only edited, of course) is most highly

regarded in the field, as are his personal qualifications as a student of Canadian federalism. The fact that his book has become invaluable to the teaching of Canadian Studies across Canada reflects, I am afraid, his personal strong orientation to the teaching of students, and the fact (as revealed in the student handbook) that he is very good at it.

I did not plan to write a testimonial, but rather to point out what is readily apparent to any student of mass communication vehicles. Even were the Gateway prepared to authenticate or balance the record, to avoid future references to anonymous sources (do we not have enough of these in Ottawa?), to lay out the facts for which it is so filled with concern; even if all this were done, Dr. Meekison remains pilloried and convicted before his university community on the basis of this insipid, vicious, little half-page story. I would submit to you that the very "unforgivable travesty" which you note in your first sentence and then seek to correct, is rather a consequence than a cause of the publication of this article.

One of course wonders what the quixotic Gereluk will uncover, looking up from his "vantage point", striking stridently from his "safety". Personally I hope, and expect, that Gateway personnel will assume their media responsibilities more assertively in the editing of their journal.

James Lightbody
Assistant Professor
Department of Political Science

Sir:

May I, as a former Gateway staffer, scream in horror at the level to which the Gateway has sunk? The recent article on Dr. J. Peter Meekison, Associate Dean of Graduate Studies and Research, is unworthy of a paper which used to pride itself upon well-researched reporting. Those who write anonymous stories based upon the petty innuendo offered by anonymous sources, used not to be granted space.

Those who delight in attempts to reconcile the factual errors of two University publications, such as The New Trail and The Folio, will find infinite pleasure in attempting to reconcile the

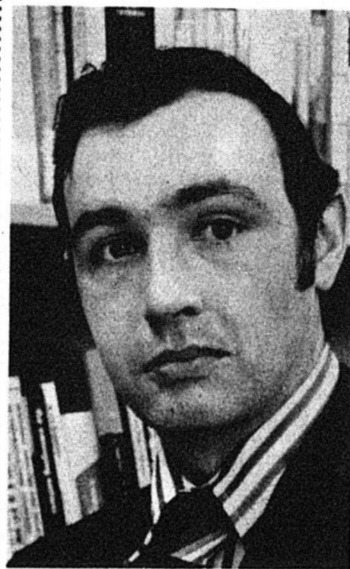
contradictory information offered by the University Calendar alone. Of course such publications are never wrong! One must search out the hidden motives of the individual or group.

For example, it is reported in the latest New Trail that 'The High Commissioner' to China is a U of A Graduate. Because High Commissioners are only appointed to Commonwealth countries, one can only conclude (a la anonymous Gateway logic) that by skillful use of Canada, the University of Alberta, and The New Trail, China is attempting to pass itself off as a member of the British

Commonwealth. (Damn clever, the Chinese!)

Professor Meekison has great talents as a teacher, a scholar, and an administrator. If universities are to withstand the crises they now face, it will be because people like J. Peter Meekison are willing to undertake unpopular, thankless tasks. One can only hope that Associate Dean Meekison and others will not be discouraged by the shortcomings of Gateway journalism.

Yours truly,
Brian L. Evans,
Associate Professor,
History Department.



Dr. Meekison is presently Associate Dean of the Department of Graduate Studies and Research.

Dear Sir:

I was quite intrigued with the "news story" and "editorial" on the problems of the Political Science Department as perceived by Mr. Gereluk in the November 25th issue of The Gateway. Since the editorial was for the most part based on the news story (sources, etc.) one can assume the two were either written by the same person or at a minimum the editorial writer completely accepted the assertions made in the "news story".

I would first like to comment on "Dr. Meekison's rapid climb up the University's ladder of success." Meekison has consistently been rated by both undergraduate and graduate students as being one of the best, if not the best, teacher in the department. I find it extraordinary that Mr. Gereluk, a graduate student in education, does not consider excellence in teaching to be of major importance in promotion! I would then assume that Mr. Gereluk did not take the time to check Meekison's publication record; it is certainly more extensive than an edited book (which I might add is quite good, but then again that

requires reading skills in order to make such an evaluation). With excellence in teaching, excellence in administration and a credible research and publication record I don't find it at all difficult to understand the university recognizing his abilities.

Mr. Gereluk is quite right in stating that something "is going on" in the Political Science Department. Collectively the faculty, graduate students, and undergraduate students have been thrashing out for the past four years problems which continually arise. If, and when, the time comes when we fail to recognize problems and collectively attempt to rectify them in the department then we are in trouble.

Finally, Mr. Gereluk notes that he has the "safety of my vantage point" in evaluating the Political Science Department. I can only say that if the same type of "sloppy reasoning" and misinformation as presented in The Gateway pervades in his academic work in education, he is in real trouble.

Jack K. Masson
Assistant Professor
Political Science

Dear Sir:

We find it interesting that the same issue which contains an article on Prof. J. Peter Meekison and an editorial on the Department of Political Science should also run a front page story about CUP's assessment that the Gateway "has a long way to go in its improving its coverage of both campus and off-campus events".

Regarding the story entitled "Distorted Credentials Inspire Questions", the only serious question inspired is about the credentials of the reporter who wrote the article. It serves as a classical example of irresponsible journalism. Dr. Meekison's credentials are not at stake. The important issue is whether a reporter can take his cue from mistakes made in two University publications (over which Dr. Meekison has no control) and the ill-conceived comments of "one contact" in the Department to write an article which represents the worst kind of character assassination? The article contains implications and innuendo which we believe are totally unfair to Dr. Meekison. The thrust of the article is to malign Dr. Meekison's teaching ability and to imply collusion in

regard to his recent promotion; this was largely based on the comments of one student. The three paragraphs devoted to this student's opinion are beneath rebuttal. We can only mourn the fact that such a student would use the Gateway as a vehicle to air his opinions which do not necessarily represent general graduate student opinion in the Department.

The article can be ignored as bad journalism. However the editorial associated with the article compounds the Gateway's irresponsibility in the matter. Charges are made such as the Department being a "home of ...Great Fear" and "students have been getting screwed by professors left and right" which verge on the criminal. We do not claim that our Department is perfect (is there any student in any Department who would?). We do claim that affairs in our Department are similar to other Departments in the University and not exceptional as implied in the editorial. Most importantly we do claim the right to handle our own affairs without interference from outside. The Gateway has no right to make such serious allegations without

substantiating them. The claim that students are "reticent" leaves us unimpressed. We wonder how diligently you tried to solicit student opinion. The fact that such a letter as this is necessary... evidence that you couldn't have tried too hard. Our opinion is that the motive for the two stories seems to be to wallow in garbage for the sake of wallowing without sincerely attempting to discover the facts.

We do not seriously expect this letter to have an impact upon you. Your invitation for someone in the Department to contact you with the truth fails to inspire us. It is clear from the tenor of your editorial that you have made up your mind about the "truth" and will not allow letters such as this which do not support your claims to interfere with your chosen destiny to "save" the Department. We can only say that the graduate students within the Department understand more fully the situation and are taking steps to clear up our difficulties. In past we have been plagued by misinformation, misinterpretation, rumor-mongering and polarization of positions before any meaningful discussion can occur. At a time when many of us feel that there are realistic solutions to any difficulties we may have, the Gateway comes to our "rescue" to perpetuate the misinformation, etc. Thank you,

Lettitors

All letters to the editor should be typed double space, not more than 250 words. Otherwise they may be abridged (exceptions will be considered). The writer is asked to include his name and telephone number with his letter. Pen names will be used at the writer's request. Letters should be sent to THE GATEWAY, Room 282, SUB, Edmonton, or should be dropped off at our offices, no later than 6:00 P.M. Tuesday and Friday, if they are to appear in the following issue. THE GATEWAY shall not be held responsible for any libel or damages incurred.

but no thanks. Save someone else. We can't afford the damage caused by your crusades.

Yours truly,
Marilyn McCreery
Michael W. Jackson
Steven Brown
Marv Wodirvsky
John Ravnik
Howard A. Leeson
Elizabeth McLean
R.W. Stubbs
Lorne Yacuk
David Howatt
David Bickford
Bob Burgis
J.R. Kelly
Graduate Students, Dept. of

Pol. Sci.

These letters are selected from those we received on this particular subject. Due to considerations of space, we have only printed those we thought were most clear and best representative of these views. We do not want to print any of the other letters we received, or are about to receive, on this subject unless the authors of such letters insist that they be published.

All the letters received and the original article are available, in our office, for perusal by any member of the university community.