

# University credibility questioned

by Prof. A.K. Davis

In recent years, two miscarriages of justice have originated in the U of A Slavic Languages Dept. The first was the Slavutych case. Denied tenure, the professor went to court and won. That case went to the Supreme Court of Canada. The University lost. The professor was reinstated, with several years back salary paid up.

The second case was Vanek. He recently won his case, by a different judicial route. An Alberta judge just ruled that the University followed improper procedures: The University should have had the matter determined in accordance with the proper procedures...

The Vanek case has been in judicial proceedings for five or six years. The University lost, once again. Other cases are pending.

What does the University Board of Governors propose to do? On October 1, 1976, the Board of Governors (mostly local businessmen) voted to give Vanek a re-hearing. If Vanek wins, he will be reinstated on that date. No back salary.

Further, and even more blatantly outrageous, the University is apparently proposing to assign the re-hearing to the same committee that originally ruled against Vanek. The University Board is proposing to act as judge, jury, and executioner. Does anyone in his right mind expect a bureaucratic committee to over-rule itself?

I say the University administration is raping justice. It offends every sense of decency. Vanek is entitled to reinstatement,

back salary, and a re-hearing by an outside tribunal. The University must rectify its dismal error, or lose its credibility.

I am not primarily concerned that five or six years of personal and lonely agony have characterized this case. I am

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*The Vanek Case: An Open Letter to the University, Edmonton, Alberta*

concerned about the viability and the credibility of the university. The university is financed by the people of Alberta and Canada — especially by the ordinary people. It must serve the people, not the bureaucrats. It must serve justice.

It is not serving justice in this case. It is white-washing, and covering up, injustice and bureaucratic flubs. It is "water-gating."

This University is, otherwise, a fine university. It is a large institution, and the pride of the little people who pay the shot for its costs. It can afford to act with disinterest, with compassion, with a commitment to simple justice. It should so act.

This case is symptomatic of major failures in university organization in Canada. There are other such examples. During my 18 years on four Prairie campuses, I have seen un-

believable instances of arbitrary, wasteful, irrational and unfair administration. Last year, as president of the Canadian Sociology & Anthropology Association, I became aware of the horrendous administrative failure at Simon Fraser University some six years ago. A new and much needed university in the Vancouver area came under maximum censure and boycott by the Canadian Association of University Teachers, and by a dozen other professional associations in Canada and abroad. This battle continues.

How can we minimize the unacceptable human and monetary costs of obsolete patterns of university administration?

Two complementary perspectives arise. The first is better defensive organization for academic and non-academic university staff. We Alberta academics now have a Faculty Staff Association which is of too little help. It has little influence, and no will. About a dozen university faculty associations in Canada have recently opted for real unions. I believe that the U of A faculty should do likewise, and should affiliate with the Canadian Labour Congress. Such a move would not imply endorsement of all CLC policies. But the fact is, most academics are hired workers. They have their salary and their skill — nothing else. They do not control large amounts of capital. If a few dabble in business and real-estate and consulting, on the side, the question arises — are they businessmen, or are they academics?

The second perspective is a large and systematic review, over

two or three years, of university administration in Canada, sponsored perhaps by the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC).

Two important studies of major aspects of our universities are now reporting. One is the Symons report on the state of Canadian studies, sponsored by the AUCC. It is a deeply disturbing report, half complete. The other is the Healy report on graduate studies in Canada, sponsored by Canada Council. It is yet to come.

I suggest that another aspect of Canadian universities needing a hard look is — administration. Except by chance, most university dept. chairs and deans are not trained as administrators. They are academic rejects, or academic staff ambitious for bureaucratic promotion. In my

limited view, a few turn out to be successful: these are personally secure, fair, competent in their fields. Another few are bad apples: personally insecure, inclined to personal vendettas, not really scholars, not oriented to public service. The mix varies. The majority are mediocrities.

In the public interest, we need more information. As a member of the Social Science Research Council of Canada, I am proposing such a study. The SSRCC is an umbrella, non-governmental organization of the academic Learned Societies of Canada.

The Vanek case is both a cause, and a symptom. The cause requires a just remedy by the University of Alberta, and by the Alberta community. The case is a symptom of rot in Canadian university administration.

## Black attacked by normal non-entity

Regarding Tom Black's letter in the September 28 issue — perhaps Mr. Black should keep such neo-assignine terms as "paleo-fascist" to himself, and instead learn to read.

As anyone who reads this excellent article knows, the theme had neither a "gee-whiz" aspect, nor did it smack of "paleo-fascist" fascination with war. The article simply described the fine aerial precision work of the Snowbird team.

The Snowbird pilots are part of a non-combat team whose purpose is to entertain the public with aesthetic displays of precision flying (a point the article made quite clear).

Regarding the Tudor, which

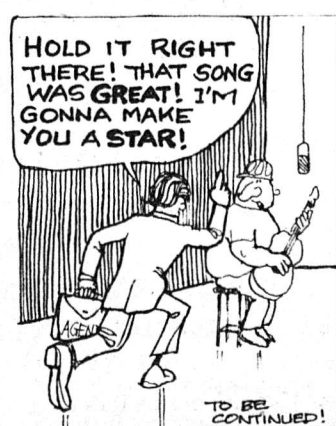
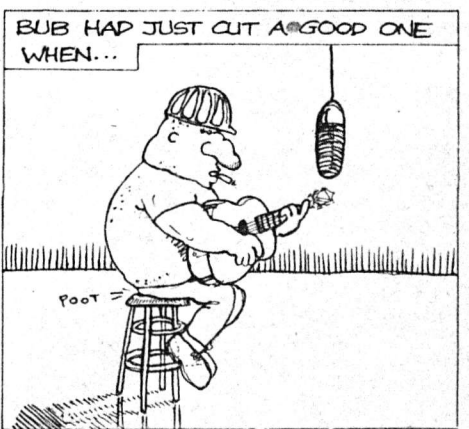
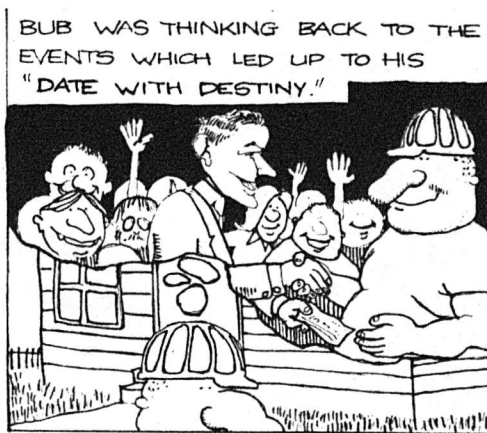
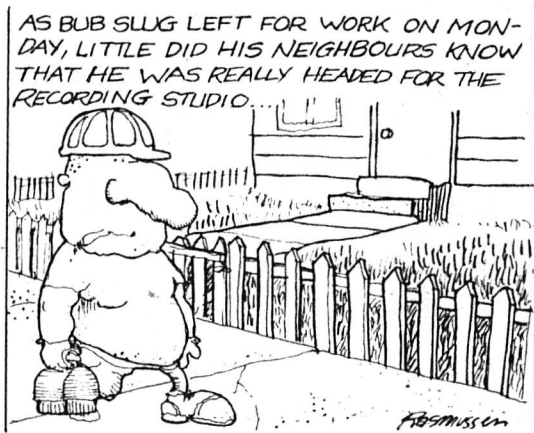
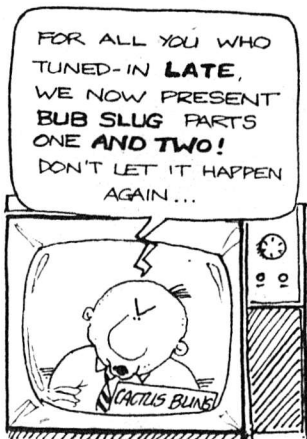
is no more than a training plane — it poses as much threat to Mr. Black and his socialist cohorts as a mosquito with a broken nose.

Perhaps, Mr. Black, you should refrain in future from submitting such non-sequitur spiels concerning subjects you know little or nothing about. (You expletive).

John Normal  
Grad Studies

*Ed. Note: We would ask all individuals who would like to fight to do so in person and not on the pages of our newspaper. If you must make personal references in a letter to the editor, do not expect to see them published.*

## BUB SLUG by Delaney & Rasmussen



To be continued...