

Party on, Garth

THERE WERE TWO CONTROVERSIES WITHIN the federal Conservative Party's ranks last week: one concerning an outspoken MP who publicly criticized his party, and another concerning a relatively less outspoken MP who's alleged to have slandered a member of the pesky official opposition.

Given this information, I'll give you two guesses as to which of the two got kicked out of their party.

If, by this point, you haven't guessed Halton MP Garth Turner, then you should probably just flip to the Comics section. Because yes, it's indeed the suddenly independent Turner who has been booted out of the Conservative party for being "too critical of his colleagues" and because "the theme of confidentiality was not being respected" on his daily blog (www.garth.ca/weblog). In other words, Turner had the audacity to speak his mind—both within and outside of Parliament and caucus chambers—about his party and others, and for that he was given the boot.

Meanwhile, a few seats down the row in Parliament, media darling (and high-ranking Foreign Affairs Minister) Peter Mackay was allegedly caught on tape infamously implying ex-beau Belinda Stronach's resemblance to the canine species of which he's so fond.

Only the most recent in a long rap sheet of derogatory comments towards women, the Liberal Party, or both, Mackay's comment was met with decidedly less chastising from his party. Indeed, compared to Turner's censuring, the Conservatives' response to Mackay's sharp tongue thus far can be summed up as his tree-house buddies patting his back and saying, "Ooh, burn!" in the general direction of Stronach's newly distanced seat.

Aside from this blatantly hypocritical behaviour, there's also a rich irony in all this: after all, part of the Conservatives' election platform was one of government transparency, yet as soon as Turner "leaked" a bit of intra-caucus information (the secret nature of which is highly debatable), he got publicly canned.

To continue with the irrelevant *Wayne's World* references, the Conservative's inconsistent response is, in essence, the equivalent of saying, "asphinctersayswhat," and then slapping that person when they say "what?"

But no matter how you feel about Turner's actions, you have to admit that Rahim Jaffer, the *de facto* disciplinarian in this case by virtue of his role as caucus chair, could have at least had the tact to inform Turner of the party's decision beforehand. Instead, Turner said he found out about his unceremonious ejection via the media, and indeed has yet to be personally notified.

Always a step or three ahead of his party, Turner saw his own demise on the horizon likely before anyone else did, and predicted as much on his blog. As he put it, "My refusal to play the role requested of me will, I am sure, lead to my political demise. But each day I am an MP will be spent answering to the voters and taxpayers first, and my political master second."

Earlier in the year, before the winds of controversy really started swirling, Turner offered up this gem: "Dissenting opinions have a very valid place within great parties. They show debate, the clash of ideas, an open-mindedness and an acceptance, even if grudging, of other points of view. Families fight. Couples squabble. Teams have issues. So, how believable is a caucus where every single member comes out of a room saying exactly the same thing?"

Alas, such high-minded philosophizing clearly has no place in Canadian politics. One pretty much has to sit as an Independent in order to harbour such notions, as the power struggles and spin doctoring of big-party politics stifles whatever dying gasps of democratic duty and political fortitude with which the most idealistic MPs may have gone into the House of Commons. And while this state of affairs is nothing new, Turner's recent shunning is a depressing reminder nonetheless.

The silver lining in all this is that the renegade Turner is now a free man, no longer required to toe the party line or to worry about what "secrets" he can and cannot divulge—all in all, a much better fit for the former journalist. Indeed, his penchant for reportage has still not left him (he runs MPtv as well, on which he interviews politicians from all parties), and this thirst for the dissemination of information has ultimately proven his demise. That is, his demise as a member of the Conservative Party, a political stripe in which he was clearly never all that comfortable anyway. Here's hoping that he flourishes as an impassioned and controversial Independent MP instead.

ADAM GAUMONT
Opinion Editor



CONAL PIERSE

LETTERS

Some feedback on SUB-par wireless signals

Re: "A fatal error has occurred if you relied on campus computing" (12 October). Mr Williams' article unfortunately mistakes the problems of the SUB wireless network with errors on the part of Academic Information and Communication Technologies (AICT). SUB wireless is maintained by the Students' Union in partnership with AICT. AICT helps the SU in solving problems with SUB's wireless. We are very aware that there are issues of SUB wireless and are working to find the source of the problem in order to get our coverage fixed as soon as possible. AICT has been cooperative in working with us on this front, even agreeing to wait to respond to Mr Williams until I had the opportunity to collect all the facts. While last week's *Council Forum* did in fact mention that this investigation was taking place, I feel it is necessary to reiterate that the SU in fact in the process of identifying the source of and solving this problem.

If there are noticeable problems in any non-SUB network, then that is an issue for AICT and they would like to hear from you. If any student has difficulty with AICT after contacting them, please let me know—I'd definitely like to see your concerns addressed.

AMANDA HENRY
VP Academic

Students' Union puts U, one S in 'useless'

It must be some sort of right of passage for new students to rail against all the mandatory university fees we must pay when we obviously gain so little from them (re: "Finish line now in sight for U-pass referendum,"

19 October). \$23 for health services, though it's all covered by Alberta health care; \$55 for Athletics and Rec, which I can't help but believe subsidizes the sports teams that it should be a privilege to play for; and of course the vague "student services" which seems to be the sort of thing that tuition was designed to pay for.

Mostly, though, I've been wondering about the approximately \$64 I pay to the Students' Union every semester, and what exactly I get for that. The Union sure hasn't succeeded in keeping tuition affordable, for one thing. It turns out that our mandatory SU fees have been paying for the SU to enable us to pay even *more* mandatory fees in the form of the \$75 universal bus pass!

Encouraging the use of public transportation over automobile travel is certainly a good thing, considering this province's role in the destruction of our environment, but I fail to see why current walkers and cyclists have to pay for other students to ride the bus, and why university must become even more unaffordable to us, so it can become more affordable to them.

How about a mandatory bike-purchase and -maintenance fee to encourage cycling? Cycling is even better for our environment, keeps one healthy and strong enough to not need the \$55 rec fee, and in most cases, it's much faster than public transportation. People that previously rode their bikes or walked to school may now choose to ride the bus, since they are paying for it anyway, and so the most environmentally friendly commuters are not only being punished, they may be reduced in numbers.

ROB FOUND
Science I

Pin article pushes the wrong buttons

If there's one thing I dislike more than political apathy, it's people writing

articles encouraging forms of political apathy. Sure, you hate politics, and you hate seeing people jumping on the "trendy bandwagon of political awareness," but why do I have to hear about it? Maybe you think solidarity is dumb, but do you think that writing an opinion article for the *Gateway* is going to make me stop wearing my anti-vivisection shirt or my "Bush is a Terrorist" pin?

Contrary to these blowhards, I think that political awareness in any form is a positive thing, and I welcome it in almost any form. The majority of North America is dangerously politically inactive, which leads to the elections of the Bushes, the Harpers and the Kleins, who in turn represent the rest of us and fuck us over, not to mention other nations and the ecosphere (a trend one would notice by pending more than 15 minutes researching an article). I would rather see a Stop Bush button than one more of those dumb "I (heart) Alberta Beef" bumper stickers. Of course, I'll admit wearing a button is not going to change the world, but what exactly are the apathetic complainers like yourself doing about changing the world?

DALLAS THOMPSON
Education III

Tanasiuk pinpoints problem with politics

Thank you! Oh, thank you so much for writing this article (re: "Don't pin your hopes on a stupid button," 19 October). Whoever's idea it was to write this story is a genius. It amazes me how much people think wearing a pin or a T-shirt makes a difference. It doesn't! Especially about US politics!

I'm just glad to know I'm not alone in this institution, full of now-socialist-but-when-they-make-their-own-money-have-suddenly-become-liberally-conservative [people], in thinking political change doesn't start with fashion, it starts with the ballot box. That's not to say fashion statements don't have

their place, but do we *all* need to be wearing "America needs to shave its Bush" buttons? Why can't we wear buttons that mean something to us, as Canadians?

Maybe next time, before someone decides to buy their anti-US button, they might decide to pick up the "It's only the NDP and the Taliban who want us to cut and run" button, or maybe they'll pick up the "The Liberals stole my money" button. I guess it just depends how much he or she wants to conform to the ways of the politically naïve masses.

ALEX HAMILTON
History II

Gateway won't get fooled again over geek/nerd distinction

Hey Michael Smith, stop stealing the geek culture (re: "Talkin' 'bout my nerd generation," 19 October). In your article, you complain for longer than should be allowed about poseurs stealing your nerd culture. Now for those true geeks out there, you know the difference between a geek and a nerd thanks to hours of debate on countless message boards. For those who aren't enlightened in the ways of the geek here's the short, short version: Geeks have social skills, nerds don't.

So Michael, just which group do you belong to? Since in your article you talk about the ability to date you must have social skills. Therefore you should be proclaiming yourself as a geek, *not* a nerd. Since the terminology escapes you, you are just another person who's latched on to being a geek because right now it's cool. Next time, if you're going to represent a group you don't belong to; at least do your research first. And Kirk is way cooler than Picard! 'Nuff said.

VANESSA SZTYM
Arts III