

We should care more about student apathy



PAUL
KNOECHEL

Perhaps I should back up to the Students' Union's latest press-grabbing endeavour over how the government is screwing students yet again: namely, that the promise of an affordable tuition plan is long overdue, and that the SU will count the days on a big pretty sign until Minister of Advanced Education Denis Herard follows through with Klein's promise. Let's just hope that they've got lots of space to expand that number—and plenty of patience, because like bad sex, we'll be waiting a long time for a conclusion that is ultimately dissatisfying.

Now, I'm not slighting the SU. Too often people complain the Students' Union isn't doing enough for students; that they're not getting anything done. That's only right on one out of two counts: the SU is doing everything that it can. It brings attention from the media to concerns of the student body and makes sure our concerns are being voiced to the province's MLAs. But they can work away until old Ralphie succumbs to liver cirrhosis—it's still not going to get any results because they have *absolutely no leverage*.

Students would like to bitch about how they're getting hosed by The Man, but I'm putting it out there that it's their fault they keep getting stepped on and ignored by their representatives. It's their fault because students don't hold the government accountable through the civil right that people the world over have actually died for: they don't vote.

Less than 25 per cent of those aged 18–24 cast ballots in 2000's federal election, and the numbers only get worse

in provincial elections. It dumbfounds me that students will sit there bitching about how the government steps on us, yet they don't do a thing about it. *Wake up!* Politicians walk all over us and ignore us because they can. They don't need to give a shit about us because we don't do anything about it.

And don't give me the, "I don't vote because no party does enough for me." Well *duh*, Einstein. What sense does it make for politicians to court the youth vote when so few will turn out to support them come election day? If they want to get a seat in government, they make promises to the people that are going to actually cast ballots for them. And when they're elected, they're going to pass laws that keep those demographics happy. As much as it sucks, it's not surprising.

The only reason Alberta's PCs dared to put through Bill 40—an amendment to the *Postsecondary Learning Act* that took tuition costs out of legislation and into regulation, meaning among other things that the party could make changes to it at any time without legislative debate—was because they knew they wouldn't suffer come next election because of it. If students would just pull themselves out of their drunken stupors for an hour to vote come election time, maybe the big bad PCs would think twice before their next "fuck the students" law.

Come on people, let's back up our SU and vote in students' interests in the next election. They're fighting a David-and-Goliath-type battle, except without some backup from the students they're actually trying to help, they got no rocks, no sling, and no hope. It's the age of the e-mail, and I know just about everyone has a minute to spare to fire off an angry one at our dear Advanced Education Minister Denis Herard (calgary.egmont@assembly.ab.ca). So go ahead and give him an earful—and tell 'im Paul sent ya.

Controversy needed on campus



CHRIS
SALTTEL

A sure sign of writer's block is when the margin of my notebook has more ink invested in doodles than the rest of the page does in words. And although my poorly drawn caricature of Hugo Chávez playing *Dance Dance Revolution* might invite some random giggles during physics class, it's hardly the methodic insight I had planned for this page. Instead, I came to an important realization: during my first two months here at the U of A, I've had nothing to attack.

I don't mean a literal attack, I mean a literary attack. There's far too much open-mindedness and tolerance here on campus. Where have all the punkasses gone? Traditionally, the role of the student has been to provoke progressive change in society, especially when things become stagnant. And as far as governments go, Alberta is about as stagnant as it comes: Klein does a lot more talking about progressive policy change than he does actually writing it. Students at the U of A seem to have adopted this stereotype naturally.

In order for students to incite any change, there must be a difference between the differences. If we all continue to tolerate each other's differences and respect each other's opinions, how can we ever hope to compete with those who willingly break the rules of argumentative engagement? Just because an issue is important to you, that doesn't make it important to anyone else. Conversely, it isn't necessary to care about all the issues at once, as is common on campus.

I see Samantha Power and the SU trying to provoke the province to deliver on its promise of affordable tuition. Here's some news: they don't



PHIL HEAD

IF YOU'RE HAPPY AND YOU KNOW IT Our SU execs are far too open-minded

care what you say, and they won't be bothered by your plight or mine—or that of any of the other students in the province. As long as there are students who can afford to go to school, all of us who complain about the cost will just be dismissed as whiners.

It's a simple economic principal. Education is an inelastic demand, which means it will always be in demand regardless of the cost. To exploit this economic phenomenon would seem cruel and unfair—and it is. But who the fuck cares?

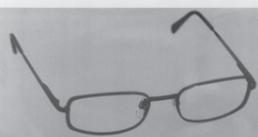
That's the kind of jaded argument we're up against. Klein might nod his head and furrow his brow but he's not listening. Ol' Ralphie is trying to remember if he taped last night's episode of *Laguna Beach*. At least I assume he's taken interest in the quandary of Kristen and Stephen, since tuition costs seem to reflect the income of the show's characters. In that show, the students live in roomy apartments, wear designer clothes and drive nice white Jeeps. It's easy to see why Klein thinks we're made of money. He

should watch *Undergrads* instead.

The advice that I have for Samantha Power and all of the students here, then, is to close your minds. Overthought opinions went out with the iPod mini. So get with the nano already, and argue with your natural beliefs, biases and stereotypes instead. Don't tolerate ideas that you don't believe in. Lower yourselves to the level of our leaders. Don't play fair. Call names. Say what shouldn't be said. Cross all the lines without hesitation.

There are a few labels SU could drop regarding the Ralphster, a lot of them dealing with his booze problem, which would have the public's attention with jaws dropped and people waiting to hear what's said next. That might get them sued for slander, but at least people would be interested. I guess the SU could always organize a celebrity wrestling match and pit Samantha Power against Ralph Klein—but that would be too cool to actually happen. Instead they'll probably put up a poster that no one but us students will read.

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