

The nature of Ed

IT SEEMS ED STELMACH HAS FINALLY MADE SOME progress towards filling his predecessor's shoes, making what was easily his most arrogant and ill-informed comment as Premier to date last week. "My government does not believe in interfering in the free marketplace," he announced to a predictably delighted group of business leaders in Calgary on 13 February. His point was that economic growth in Alberta—and particularly the oil sands—must not be limited by any governmental sanctions aimed at curbing CO2 emission.

This is an incredibly greedy and short-sighted position to take, even for a fiscally conservative government like his. Despite Stelmach's cocky *laissez-faire* attitude, any real economist can tell you that there are plenty examples of government interference in the marketplace: for example, regulations against monopolization, exploitation and, yes, even pollution already exist right under his nose here in Alberta.

While in an idealized economic system no interference is required, these types of checks and balances are in place to adjust a non-idealized system (ie a dynamic planet that's been operating efficiently for the past four billion years), one wherein so-called "externalities" can take place. And the impending global warming crisis is the externality to end all externalities.

Stelmach's comments at the business luncheon were only the beginning, however. Three days later, David Suzuki, in Calgary for a speech of his own, made the relatively uncontroversial observation that unchecked oil sands development "doesn't show any economic vision or leadership as far as I'm concerned."

The *Calgary Herald* promptly attempted to transform this relatively innocuous comment into a bitter personal feud, reporting that "one of Canada's top climate change crusaders blasted Alberta Premier Ed Stelmach on Friday, saying his reluctance to curb greenhouse gas emissions makes him unworthy of leading the petro-powered province." "STEMMACH BLASTS SUZUKI'S 'HOT AIR,'" screamed the *Edmonton Journal* on Sunday in response.

Stelmach went on to say, "It's clear that green politics are as much about emotion as they are about science." But who's really got the emotion and the agenda here? The thousands of scientists who have objectively collected mountains of data that clearly and indisputably indicates the need to reduce CO2 emissions drastically, or the business leaders and politicians who have money and careers invested in the continuation and proliferation of this lucrative but pollutant industry?

Despite their utter ignorance, Stelmach's comments serve quite well to underscore what's fundamentally at issue here. It all comes down to a question of what you put first: the economy or the environment; the maximization of profit or sustainability. But as Suzuki rightly points out—and what Stelmach and Co just don't seem to get—is that without an environment, there is no economy.

I'm not angry at Stelmach so much as disappointed. Ralph Klein spewed such quasi-informed profit-driven rhetoric all the time, but here we thought we were getting a new face in Alberta politics—someone who, while still a member of the Conservative party, didn't seem to have completely lost his grip on reality. Instead, it seems we're getting another bull-headed businessman who's putting a misunderstanding of the science of economics ahead of the science of... sciency stuff.

Of course, an intelligent, dynamic and well-intentioned political leader could only ever come about in an idealized system too—and Alberta just ain't it, I'm afraid. As a result, Steady Eddie's visionless position shouldn't come as too much of a surprise—it's a bit like asking a cocaine addict to kick his habit mid-snort.

Still, I can't decide which is worse: Stelmach's flip-pant attitude towards environmental and economic sustainability, or the *Herald* and the *Journal's* utter disregard for journalistic integrity. Oh, wait, yes I can: it's totally the first one.

ADAM GAUMONT
Opinion Editor

An Oscar grouch

Canadian film
Wins best animated short
But who gives a shit?

PAUL OWEN
Sports Editor

LETTERS

Just say No to CRO's ruling

(Re: "Anti-Coke posters net \$900 fine," 13 February). Having attended the Killer Coke talk during International Week, I am appalled that this group's materials are suddenly considered [contraband] on this campus, all because an SU election campaign is underway. These materials were passed out at the talk for those in attendance to help distribute and post; it is ridiculous that the group should now be held responsible [for] collecting and removing them when they could be almost anywhere.

Furthermore, to penalize a campaign side because members of this group expressed interest in getting involved with it is beyond absurdity. It is disappointing that the pre-campaigning ruling was upheld, as I believe with that comes the end of freedom of speech and freedom of association on our campus. Punishing the No side in this manner will ultimately accomplish nothing but silencing valuable information that would have helped students to make an informed decision on this issue. If nothing else this should be a wake up call to students as to the sad state of affairs of our student government.

HELENE PARADIS
Arts II

Gateway now a tabloid, apparently

(Re: "Democracy gets drowned out by anti-Coke antics," "Just say No to SAKCoke," 13 February). I must say, it has been a while since I've seen such a display of poor reporting in the *Gateway*. You make several references to this SAKCoke group, but yet you do not include their side of the story or any information about them that did not come from either your own opinion or the Students' Union. You blame this group for the posters and stickers around campus, but who is this group? They seem almost like a non-entity seeing [as] no one actually seems to know who any of them are, or if you do you at least don't talk to them. Also, I attended the Ray Rogers event during I-Week, and the tables there were stacked with these materials, which were all free for the taking. The fact that Mr Prusakowski and Mr Frehner's articles seem to blame this group for all these materials being up makes no sense whatsoever, as they were being distributed even at CJSR for cripe's sake! I can only hope the remaining elections coverage will be a little bit more thoughtful and a little less tabloidish.

AIMEE BRYANT
Native Studies II

Pre-campaigning rules need revising

I was saddened by the lack of thoughtfulness expressed in the 13 February issue of the *Gateway*. Specifically, I was struck by the unwillingness of the Opinion writers to critically evaluate the implications of the recent development in "the Coke question." The two pieces



concerning this situation failed to recognize that democratic function has very little to do with running a single plebiscite. Democracy was already stifled before the anti-Coke activities or the CRO ruling even occurred.

Elections, plebiscites and referendums are simply forums, not the high manifestation of democratic function. The operation of democracy involves a consistently active political consciousness on part of the population. These articles represent a technique of dulling this very same consciousness. Chastising a group for trying to promote awareness for a cause they think is important does nothing for democracy. No matter how ridiculous you may believe this cause to be, the ability to enter the public arena is vital to democratic debate.

While surely the writers of these two pieces would point [to] the "campaign period" for this kind of discussion to occur, I urge them to reconsider the stunted view they embrace of debate and democracy. For real debate to occur—an essential component of active and ongoing democratic function—we must constantly think about what barriers implicitly exist in any political landscape. Only with this type of contemplation does the possibility exist to create stutter in thought, [t]hereby allowing the re-evaluation [of] our present state of affairs. If anything, these authors should be criticizing the outdated campaign rules that the CRO levied against an act of participation in critique.

I will leave it to other commentators to illustrate the prosperousness of applying a campaign rule to a non-existent No side, especially in an arena where the presumed Yes counterpart has thousands of dollars in advertising up year round.

CHRIS ALDERSON
Political Science IV

Enjoy bitter irony

I'm thrilled that the University has taken such a hard stance on pre-campaigning—it's not as though Coke machines every 30 feet, bright red Coca-Cola cups everywhere on campus and million-dollar commercials count as swaying the masses. We wouldn't want an under-funded, under-represented group to have an unfair advantage over a billion-dollar international corporation would we?

EMILY WILLIAMS
Science I

Free speech should include anti-Coke materials as well

I was thoroughly disappointed with Matt Frehner's [13 February editorial], "Democracy gets drowned out by anti-Coke antics." He posits that the "immature," "alarmist" Killer Coke posters and paraphernalia that have been popping up around campus will interfere with U of A students' ability to make an informed decision when voting in the Coke sponsorship plebiscite in the near future. What it seems he's really saying is that he agrees with Rachel Woynorowski that freedom of speech should be punished with a \$900 fine—to a group that has no involvement with the SU plebiscite to begin with!

Firstly, I'm insulted that Frehner had the audacity to insult the student population's intelligence by suggesting that we are incapable of doing some research on this issue ourselves. At least those "alarmist" posters were able to get people thinking. Posters alone do not have the power, though, to turn someone into an irrational extremist. Get a grip, Matt.

And as for Rachel Woynorowski's

accusation of pre-campaigning, this is not a case of one side trying to gain a political advantage over another. This is a matter of informing students about their personal contribution to the abuses that the people who make their life more comfortable suffer from in the name of capitalism. In a liberal institution such as the University of Alberta, it only makes sense that students should be able to exercise their rights as Canadian citizens and as compassionate human beings. We're all here to learn something. Don't get in our way, Rachel! And while you're at it, grow a heart and a conscience.

KAYTLIN WOYNOROWSKI
Arts I

Fort Sask part of 'Pass

(Re: "Transit costs don't add up," 8 February). I would like to quickly clear up something in response to Ms Sayer's 8 February letter regarding transit costs for Ft Saskatchewan transit users. The \$129 Ft Saskatchewan monthly student pass is actually two passes in one: a \$75 pass that grants ridership on the Ft Saskatchewan service to Claireview LRT, and then a \$54/month ETS student pass that allows her unlimited use of the ETS system.

Should the U-Pass be adopted at referendum Ms Sayer will be able to purchase just the \$75/month Ft Saskatchewan student transit pass to travel to Claireview LRT station, and could then use her U-Pass to ride anywhere on ETS thereafter. Indeed, Ms Sayer would experience the very same net savings with the U-Pass as every other student who currently buys an ETS pass.

SAMANTHA POWER
SU President

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