



## BREAKFAST ROUNDTABLES WITH PRESIDENT SAMARASEKERA

President Samarasekera invites students to join her for breakfast and an open discussion on topics of interest to you.

**When:** Friday, March 16, 2007, 7:30 am to 8:30 am  
**Where:** Saskatchewan Room, Faculty Club, 11435 Saskatchewan Drive

Register to attend at [www.president.ualberta.ca/rsvp](http://www.president.ualberta.ca/rsvp)  
Enter event code: 1011  
The deadline to register is Monday, March 12, 2007.

For further information, please contact:  
Events Coordinator, Office of the President  
Phone: 492-1525

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### Feeling Lost?

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\*note: no actual beverages provided

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# More women needed, stat

Proportional representation among the sexes needed in Parliament as well



ELIZABETH  
MCMILLAN

If there's a female candidate in an election, I'll vote for her over male counterparts. I'll do this regardless of prior experience, proven ability or even ideology. I'll do this because there aren't enough women in politics, and because this isn't going to change unless someone takes a chance and people support her potential.

Do women deserve a position just because they're women? Yes. Politics is something that people learn by doing. Given the chance, women have equal ability to every man running.

Fourteen years after Kim Campbell became a short-lived female prime minister, the Canadian political landscape still is the old boys' club it's always been. Since 1993, there's only been a two per cent increase in the number of female Members of Parliament. Today, women hold 64 out of a possible 308 seats. Odd, isn't it, that 51 per cent of the population account for only 20 per cent of elected representatives? More like unacceptable. By continuing to produce male governments, we never succeed in changing the status quo. We need representatives who actually represent the population.

Around the world, the proportion

of women in governments was 16 per cent in 2005. Here in Canada, we're nowhere close to the stated parliamentary goal of 30 per cent women MPs. Zero to 30—much less 50—doesn't happen overnight, but at this rate, it's going to take forever.

Therefore something drastic needs to be done. In every level of Canadian politics, white males are a dime a dozen. Even if they do their job well, they're still doing the same thing that's always been done. If male candidates are in fact concerned about equity, why aren't they campaigning for someone else?

I would rather see women elected now than wait for a time when all female candidates are deemed ready for office. I would rather give a woman experience than agree with what she does. Giving women the opportunity to hold powerful positions opens the door for other women to do the same.

I didn't used to think this way. But nothing will change unless female politicians stay vocal and become more expected, less exceptional. I'd like to believe that gender is no longer an issue, but even in student politics, that's far from the case. Having female presidents of the Students' Union and University doesn't exempt us from trends that go beyond campus.

Realistically, it's not surprising that women aren't in a rush to put their names on ballots. There are few female role models in politics right now to begin with, and the women who do enter into the political arena are either vilified or objectified.

Strong, vocal women are bitchy, not respected. Women aren't taken seriously, instead criticized for being too serious; not feminine enough; poorly dressed; lesbian.

The opposite is no more promising. Intergovernmental Affairs Minister Rona Ambrose gets more attention for her hair than her policies. When Belinda Stronach crossed the floor to join the Liberal Party, she was called a whore, a prostitute and a dipstick, among other things.

Ever since, Stronach's image and sexual relationships have garnered more headlines than the politics of any woman in Ottawa. Either way, women are dismissed because their female bodies don't fit into the typical political suits. Student politics is one arena that should be open to new faces. No one SU member is going to change the world. Even the most dedicated individual can only achieve limited success during their year in office, and students will be hard-pressed to find significant ideological differences between platforms in any given year. Except maybe, the serious lack of female candidates. There's only one woman running. For six positions.

That's right: next year will be an all-male executive, with the possible exception of the president. The best we can hope for is people who care about their job and represent students well—but maybe it's time we realized that gender diversity isn't the end of the world; in fact, may be the much-needed end to politics as we know it.

# The days of political goonery are no more



PAUL  
KNOECHEL

The secret ballot, a cornerstone practice in this great democratic experiment of ours, has gone and broken my heart. For the longest time, I had no idea where my path would take me in terms of a career. Despite years in university and a childhood full of, "So, what do you want to do when you grow up?" I was at a loss; that is, until I was struck by revelation. And by revelation, I mean an elbow.

It was right to the side of the face, out of nowhere, during an Alexisonfire concert when I was trying to enjoy the group's soothing punk-rock stylings. To make a long story short, I discovered that I myself had a knack for throwing elbows in large, tightly packed crowds.

So what does this have to do with my career aspirations? Throwing elbows isn't usually the most sought after skill in the world, after all. Well, I have much more to offer employers: I'm adequately competent in almost all tasks, large enough to be intimidating to small children, boring enough to be inconspicuous—and, after countless hours of playing *Grand Theft Auto*, am completely lacking in any form of morals. Enter in my interest of politics and my contempt for most of the populace, and I'm set to be the perfect right-hand man of the corrupt politician.

Yes, political goonery seemed like the ideal line of work for me. Most of the time you run assistant-like chores: get coffee, copy this, call person X and

so forth. But every so often, it's broken up by the likes of, go blackmail this person, bribe that union, and whatnot. So imagine my disappointment when I discovered that the golden age of voter intimidation ended in 1874, when the Government of Canada officially adopted the secret ballot a mere seven years after Confederation.

Almost any other point in history would have served me beautifully for the lifestyle of a political goon. Of the thousands of years humans existed without democracy, all I would have had to do is make sure that the peasants were good and afraid of A) being invaded, and B) the men at the top. In the first Western democracy in Athens, for example, there were a lot less people that could vote—and therefore less people to intimidate and coerce.

Even in the age of modern democracy, balloting used to be a public event, with crowds of voters shouting out support for one candidate or another. These crowds were rife with goons of one affiliation or another, intimidating as many people as they could into vote for their side. Imagine how well my elbow-throwing skills would have served me then. Now what am I supposed to do with it? A useful skill no doubt—but hardly a career.

I suppose that's the ever-changing face of democracy. Judging by the replies I've been getting back from all levels of government, there are no plans to bring back oral balloting. But that doesn't mean I'm giving up on my political aspirations. There's still plenty of money to be "collected," bribes to be placed and ballot boxes to be stuffed. I'm glad that there's still plenty of electoral and political corruption out there—I just wish it was still out in the open enough that I'd get to toss some elbows into the mix.

## THE BURLAP SACK

Being a political apathist myself, I've tried to avoid the Coke issue as best I can, but it seems that even an ignoramus like myself isn't safe from the leviathan grip of the political machine. But since I've gotten involved, it's become apparent that Coke has crossed a line.

The other day, I ventured down into SUB Mart to quench my thirst with a delicious, refreshing bottle of Barq's-brand Root Beer. It really has bite, you know. Much to my dismay, however, something had gone awry. As my fingertips massaged the little plastic cap in a counter-clockwise twist, I discovered the source of the trouble: Coca-Cola has changed their bottle caps.

Have you seen this shit? The tall, proud caps from days of yore are no more! The friction-friendly ribbed surfaces have been replaced by a pale imitation of their former selves, pathetic, stubby caps that my manly digits can't hope to tackle. How does Coke even hope for me to get at the sweet, succulent elixir encased within its tapered crystal temple when I can't even get the goddamned lid off?

Mark my words, Cola-boys. You've made yourselves a powerful enemy today. Were I able to choose Mug Root Beer on campus, I now would, but consider my switching from bottles to cans a message: my corporate beverage desires are not to be trifled with—into the sack you go!

MIKE KENDRICK