

Democracy still on standby in Legislature

WITHOUT LAUNCHING INTO THE SCIENTIFIC intricacies of how excessive pollution in the form of carbon emissions is damaging to the ecosystem, or how the depletion of natural resources is occurring at a frightening pace in this booming province of ours, environmental degradation is an issue to be taken seriously. Planetary woes are not insignificant trumpery concocted by a few radial extremists, but rather a matter of grave consequence for the immediate future of over 6.5 billion people. And while it's clear at this point that Alberta Premier Ed Stelmach will put business interests above those of Mother Earth, brushing the issue off in jest is not an appropriate response to what should be a constructive debate.

Don't get me wrong, I don't hate laughter; in fact, lightening the mood can often go a long way when dealing with particularly heavy subject matter. However, there's a distinction to be made between taking a breather and trivializing an effort to flesh out a topic of concern—especially during legislative debate.

But trivializing the need for Alberta to reduce its emissions is exactly what Stelmach did during question period yesterday when New Democrat MLA Dave Eggen asked the leader of the Progressive Conservatives how the government plans to reduce the intensity of the province's carbon dioxide emissions, instead of focusing on the absolute amount.

Rather than taking the time to craft an intelligent response, Steady Eddie followed in the footsteps of former premier Ralph Klein, continuing the proud tradition of piddling weighty topics in favour of playing Mr Funnyman. "You want absolute?" Stelmach asked Eggen. "Absolutely, right now? Park your car—that will give you absolute emissions." Luckily for Stelmach, garnering laughter is guaranteed, since 60 of the legislature's 83 seats are filled by his faithful party members, who'd rather make light of climate change than accept the challenge of tackling it in a progressive manner.

Despite the fact that Eggen is one of just four elected NDPs in the province, the issue he brought to the table extends beyond political stripes; simply put, it affects the social well-being of PCs in the same way that it affects the minority who identify with the opposition and their different point of view. As a leader of the province, Stelmach represents each and every Albertan, and whether or not he agrees that environmental concerns should be prioritized, he has a social responsibility as a public figure to, at the very least, consider the opinions and ideas of other elected members of the Legislature. Government is a strange beast that exists for the very purpose of argumentation; its role is to negotiate contentious issues in the spirit of co-operation, and refusing to do so is nothing short of dictatorial.

Stelmach's petty remarks exemplify the greatest political challenge in Alberta: lack of discourse between the different parties. While it's clear that the vote will always sway in the favour of the PCs and that motions from the oppositions are likely to be shot down by the ruling majority, it's nothing short of irresponsible to refuse a healthy debate—to actually challenge oneself to think. And though discussions of such nature are prone to go around in circles, taking more time than necessary to arrive at unimaginative solutions, perhaps if politicians spent less time trying to outwit each other with what results in trite insults, governments might actually begin to represent the people who elect them.

CHLOÉ FEDIO
Managing Editor

Where'd the time go?

Oil prices too high?
Make the sun rise earlier!
Fuck bio-diesel

MATT FREHNER
Editor-in-Chief

LETTERS

Listerites are hacks too

To the Listerite who so lovingly screamed, "in your face SU hacks, we beat you!" at the Students' Union election night results party, I must ask, are you not also a hack as well?

Yes, Michael Janz, or "Janzie" as you so affectionately call him, is going to be the new SU President, and he currently sits on Council as an Arts Councilor, which by definition would also make him an SU hack as well, would it not? So did you beat him as well? And I bet you are going to be surprised to learn that through the hard work you contributed to the Janz campaign, you unwittingly became a happy, do-gooder of a hack yourself.

This letter is not meant as an attack on Michael Janz or his campaign that he ran. In fact, I think Mr Janz will do a remarkable job and will continue the work that the past SU presidents have completed thus far. Rather, this letter is a call for the before-mentioned Listerite to widen the Lister world that he lives in and perhaps embrace the SU hack that is dying to escape from inside.

ASHLEY YU
Science IV

More 'real feminists' needed, stat

As a feminist, I found [Elizabeth McMillan's] article "More women needed, stat" (6 March) to be both insulting and sexist—in fact, insulting towards both men and women (not to discount the other genders).

Capable women deserve positions in government because they accurately represent the views of their constituents, not because of their reproductive organs. A true feminist would argue for their election based on their merits, in a gender-egalitarian form. To do so otherwise erodes democracy and demeans women.

While I do agree that women in politics are faced with undue biases, I do not believe that insulting men is the solution. You argue that by electing women, you will more accurately reflect the makeup (pun intended) of our society. However, since when do all women, or men for that matter, think alike? People should vote based on their political leanings, not based on kindergarten "gurlz rule!!" logic.

ALAN TANNAS
Arts III

Time for Gateway to grow a heart

(Re: "Time for Council to grow a pair," 8 March). To be honest, I didn't even read this article. I have lost all interest in SU politics. But I was interested in filling in the blanks of the title: "Time for Council to grow a pair ... of testicles," I'm assuming.

After I stopped giggling profusely at the thought of male genitalia, I had a thought: is it still kosher to associate testicles with fiscal responsibility? If so, I guess I should really start thinking seriously about getting back to the kitchen.

This is like someone telling me that if I "got some balls" or would just "man up," I would be a better all-

FIRST ROUND VOTES FOR:	
FEMALE CANDIDATES: 1667	ROBOT CANDIDATES: 1940

MATTHEW BARRETT

around person. Despite the audacity of such a claim, things like this are said all the time. And we wonder why there was only one woman running in the SU election campaign.

MAGGIE BOSSE
Arts IV

Smoking not just a habit

(Re: "Will that be anti-smoking legislation or non?" 8 March). Smoking is not a hobby, Mr Owen. Smoking is a drug addiction. It's unfortunate and sad how many people like you treat smokers as second-class people ...

Almost all smokers I've met desperately wish to quit, whether secretly or openly. However, unlike dancing, playing basketball or driving on the wrong side of the road in England, smoking is not a habit that can be easily shaken off. Nicotine is the most addictive substance known to man, and one can get addicted to smoking as soon as they have their first cigarette. Instead of looking down upon smokers, non-smokers need to be more understanding of this medical condition.

OLYA PRUDKA
Engineering III

Alliance stats stink

(Re: "Victoria Proposes Sewage as Potential Energy Resource," 8 March).

How about a lesson regarding the quotation of scholarly works at this academic institution? When someone from the Georgia Strait Alliance is quoted as saying that the fecal coliform bacteria level is over 1400 per cent too high on the surface of the Georgia Strait, you might want to verify that they haven't placed a couple of extra zeroes in there before it is sent to the press.

I checked their staff [on] their website, and while many of them have an "interest and passion" for environmental issues or a "background"

in biology, only one of them claims to hold a credential that could even partially qualify them to make a statement about fecal coliform levels.

Yes, crapping in the ocean, as Victoria has done for many years, is likely not as good for the environment as, say, not crapping in the ocean; however, to suggest that fecal coliform levels are more than 1400 per cent too high in a waterway of that size [and] with a tidal flow of that magnitude is pure crap.

I lived on Vancouver Island for 15 years and thoroughly enjoyed the pristine beauty and cleanliness of the Georgia Strait. While living there I also had a very quick swim in Prospect Lake when, due to geese, it was around five times over the fecal coliform level—and it was quite immediately apparent, hence my short stay in the water. If that lake, which was measured by a regulated government agency, was five times the recreational level then I can assure you that a body of water that was 1400 per cent over would resemble the fluid in a non-flushing toilet at a frat house after a full weekend of drinking Guinness and competitively eating expired carnival food dipped in cream of prune/asparagus soup.

CHRIS SCHEIDEMAN
Engineering III

T-shirt topples tally

My fellow students, allow me to defend my own position. I love politics. I study them here at the University and I explore possibilities and opportunities to engage and discuss politics in our community. I believe that I have been completely open-minded in this process and have considered all sides from many differing perspectives.

On Thursday I was invited to two different events concerning politics. The first was an evening with the Rt Hon Prime Minister of our country, who spoke intelligently and with prestige regarding economic

development, accountable government and the possibility of reducing and restructuring our country's upper house, the Senate. By listening to the PM's speech, I found that I completely agree with his words and his ideas, and thus I proudly wore the blue shirt I was given.

I proceeded to my next political event, the SU Election Result Party at the Powerplant. I made a conscious decision to wear my blue shirt: to be facetious and controversial, and to encourage debate and discussion amongst my politically minded friends. My plan was successful in that I was able to engage in several interesting and perplexing asides with some friends and some foes. As far as I am concerned, this is the best part of the education process and essentially what university ought to be.

I will not apologize for attending either event, nor will I apologize for wearing a blue shirt. I will however admit that of all things, perhaps I should not have offered an arm to my friend Amanda, whom I wanted to support and praise for a job well done. I understand that for the purpose of her platform and the integrity she holds within student politics, I should not have imposed affiliation by wearing blue while offering support. I hope that the students who judged her for this will reconsider.

CANDICE MALCOLM
Political Science IV

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