

Non-confidence has got my vote

I CAN'T SAY THAT I HAVE MUCH CONFIDENCE IN how our country plans its finances.

Stephen Harper's Conservative minority government will present the federal budget on 19 March, and that means that Canadian newspapers and television will soon be buzzing with talk of an election. Hidden below their desks, news anchors are positively erect at the thought of the budget failing and the government dissolving.

But first, let's take a step back for all of us that slept through social studies class in Grade Ten: the federal budget, along with tax measures and votes on the Speech from the Throne, are confidence votes. That is, if the measure fails to pass, Parliament is saying that it doesn't have the confidence that the ruling party can lead the country.

When this happens, the Prime Minister can do one of two things: either resign, or yank the Governor General away from making up new awards (or doing photo ops in Afghanistan or whatever the hell it is Michaëlle Jean does with her time) and get them to call an election.

The basic theory is that, if you can't get the budget passed, you can't run the country. If they can't balance the chequebook, how are they going to pay for all those votes in the next election? The idea makes sense on paper. But like a lot of ideas that look good on paper, such as paying people in suits that you've never met to tell other people in suits that you've never met what matters to you, the confidence budget rule doesn't make sense in the real world.

First of all, we already have a vote to show that we have no confidence in a minority government: the creatively entitled "vote of non-confidence." It does the same thing as a failed budget vote—it dissolves Parliament and forces an election. That's how Paul Martin's government was given the boot.

So who benefits by making the federal budget a confidence vote? Not the party currently in power. Harper doesn't have the finesse—or the pure contempt for the process—that Trudeau had when he deliberately forced a non-confidence vote to turn his minority government into a majority in 1974. Instead, the Conservatives have to give in to the demands of the less powerful parties in an effort to appease them, because if they don't, there will be an election. However, this doesn't mean that the non-confidence vote is necessarily a great thing for the opposition parties. Take the NDP, for instance, which has recently seen declining poll numbers: if an election were to be called next week, the party could lose some significant seats, forcing it to swallow a lacklustre budget in an effort to stave off a contest and keep a hold on its power.

Seeing as we already have the option to hold an actual vote of no confidence, all the budget confidence does is stifle any hopes of compromise or actual discussion on how to spend the nation's money. The government in power has to make sure that the proposal they present is accepted the first time, while the opposition parties are scared away from contesting budget items if the political landscape isn't favourable. What we get as Canadians is a watered-down budget instead of something that could truly reflect the needs of the nation.

As it stands, Parliament doesn't get the chance to differentiate between, "We need a new budget," and, "We need a new government." Instead, we need a whole new system.

SCOTT LILWALL
Deputy News Editor

A party of one

AFTER PROTESTING THE COMMENCEMENT SPEECH from John McCain last year, students at Columbia are once again unhappy with the choice of their graduation speaker. In an attempt to be less controversial, Columbia selected Matthew Fox of *Lost* fame—a 1989 grad of the school who also played on the football team. Now the ungrateful grads are upset that instead of getting a speaker of note, they're getting a piece of Hollywood beefcake. They shouldn't really complain, though: at least it's not that fucking Hurley guy.

PAUL OWEN
Sports Editor



MIKE KENDRICK

LETTERS

Soundwave sour grapes over election results

To the human who drew the political cartoon in the 12 March issue of the *Gateway*: Amanda Henry is no human, she is a robot! Your journalistic integrity is substantially sub par. You fail to notice her superior qualities that separate her from the rest of you fleshbags.

I hate you Dollankys.

SOUNDWAVE
Science IV

Edmonton no Vancouver

(Re: "U-Pass in service with Yes vote," 13 March). As a graduating student this year I did not feel the necessity to participate in last week's referendums. However, I believe that the recent U-Pass is rather unfortunate. Apart for the typical "tyranny of the majority" versus "let's live in a communist utopia" sort of discussion, there was some logistical problems that were not debated.

The Yes side continually upheld the virtues of the U-Pass tax on the basis that it will increase ridership and that it is a good deal for a majority of the students. The problem with this is that the Yes side [was] using asymmetrical comparisons. Simply looking at the stats provided in Tuesday's article, one can see how the U of A U-Pass ranks among other major universities. Only SFU and

UBC—two Vancouver universities—are higher, and for good reason. A U-Pass in Vancouver, as Vancouverites know, is exponentially more valuable than a U-Pass in Edmonton, yet U of A students are told that increased ridership is a main factor based on such numbers.

Edmonton, however, is not Vancouver. The UBC bus pass is highly valued and used essentially because of the city in which UBC is located, as well as the efficiency of the transit system. Edmonton's transit system, frankly, sucks. The only use most students will receive from their U-Pass is a ride to school and maybe to an Oilers or Eskimos game. Of course ridership will increase, but probably more comparable to the U-Passes of Calgary and Victoria (28-30 per cent), yet at a much higher cost (\$56 and \$62 compared to \$75).

Students will find themselves paying yet another unnecessary and unfair student fee next year—I feel for the minority that are being forced to live with the mistakes of the majority.

BRAD RICHERT
Philosophy/Religious Studies IV

Letters to the editor should be dropped off at room 3-04 of the Students' Union Building or e-mailed to letters@gateway.ualberta.ca.

The *Gateway* reserves the right to edit letters for length and clarity, and to refuse publication of any letter it deems racist, sexist, libellous or otherwise hateful in nature. The *Gateway* also reserves the right to publish letters online.

LETTERS FROM THE ARCHIVES

'Fancy Skating Club' a welcome addition to women's varsity sports

I was indeed glad to read in your last issue of prospective plans for the formation of a University Fancy Skating Club next year.

The thought has occurred to me that the tremendous effort and energy now being expended with indifferent success in one of our major sports might be turned to better advantage if directed in a different channel.

Undoubtedly you see what I mean, you know—Girls' Hockey, which sport along with the Men's Hockey, each year receives a rather substantial sum from the Students' Union.

I should be very foolish to state that our sex is more capable of equalling the achievements of mere [men] in every line of endeavour; but I must confess that our good points, both mental and physical, show up to better advantage in such sports as tennis, basketball, swimming and fancy skating.

Along with our major sport of hockey we should have rugby, boxing and wrestling, for I know that a few of my sister Pembinites after years of practice in such noble and exhilarating sports as parlour

rugby until 10:30 each evening would thus be given an adequate opportunity to exhibit their prowess to the general public.

But seriously, as our French professor says, "Revenons a nos moutons." Don't you think it would be very much nicer to see our hockey girls gyrating gracefully through the intricacies of fancy skating than to see them dressed masculinely and falling in such absurd fashions in a hockey game?

An Inter-Varsity Fancy Skating Competition could easily be arranged and our girls given an opportunity of visiting Saskatoon and Winnipeg, particularly the latter city, where so much interest is taken in fancy skating.

I hope, dear Mr Editor, that I'm not taking up too much valuable space, but like many other girls who skate a little I feel that such a change would be of more benefit to the girls generally.

Yours truly,

"JEAN"
8 March, 1928

Letters from the Archives is a semi-regular feature where the *Gateway* runs historical letters that we feel are of particular importance—or are just really hilarious.

Now you can check out all the old-timey fun for yourself! Just go to thegatewayonline.ca and follow the links to the *Gateway's* digital archives.