

Real-life trolling is a waste of time

ON THIS WINTERLY VALENTINE'S DAY, I'D LIKE to pass up discussing my own crippling loneliness in favour of the recent actions of a group who share my heart's frozen ailment—the Internet nerd hive known as Anonymous. They're usually content to swarm amongst the online "chan" forums, trading odd pornography and homemade Internet memes for chuckles. But recently, the group tried to accomplish something far greater than their collective sex lives ever will: a worldwide protest of the Church of Scientology.

"Anon" was spurred into action by Scientology's strict control of information regarding the Church and its members, which is akin to throwing a rock at a bee hive in this age of information-sharing. Their increasing assaults on Scientology culminated last Sunday with a worldwide protest, where, depending on the city, dozens or hundreds of mask-wearing teens descended upon the Church's offices with signs and music, shouting their favourite Internet jokes all the while.

And that's the problem: it's impossible to take Anonymous seriously as protesters when they sing Rick Astley's "Never Gonna Give You Up." Likewise, rewording parts of the *Fresh Prince of Bel-Air* theme to poke fun at Scientology does not a stirring protest chant make. It just becomes the Mardi Gras of the Internet-savvy: everyone's in costume, taking to the streets and having a grand ol' time, but failing to make a dent in the deeper issues that they were trying to address.

The nature of Anonymous itself also makes it difficult for any of their actions to snowball into a genuine strike against Scientology. After Sunday, the forums were split as to whether the protest had been a huge success or a terrible failure. Without some kind of command or organization outside of mob rule to guide the group, everyone's expectations for the protests varied immensely, which caused polarized internal squabbling that has the group doing barrelrolls.

That's a shame, because when they aren't just goofing off, Anonymous do manage to raise some serious and often ignored points. Scientology is bizarre (as the recently leaked Tom Cruise video has shown), isolates members from their families, and is quick to attack and silence anyone who raises concerns as to their beliefs or actions. Protest signs like "I'm too poor to worship Scientology" point out the church's potentially conniving intentions, and, while there were serious moments to the protests, the only things that get put on YouTube for the world to see are the silly ones, which makes the whole thing feel like a big in-joke—one that's just as happy not actually making a difference as it would be bringing Scientology to its knees.

As a result, despite protests in a number of population centres worldwide and ample news coverage, Anonymous's protest against the Church of Scientology was nothing but an epic fail.

PAUL BLINOV
Arts & Entertainment Editor

Spielberg pulls out

THE CAMPAIGN TO GET CHINA TO END THEIR tacit support of the Sudanese government's actions in Darfur claimed a victory on Tuesday, when Steven Spielberg resigned his position as creative director of the Beijing Olympics in protest. China imports billions of dollars worth of oil—often in exchange for weapons—from Sudan. Most protesters believe that an embargo from China would make the Sudanese government break down and stop killing people.

Unfortunately for Darfur, China isn't going to do shit. For the Chinese government, taking a position against the human rights abuses in Sudan would set a dangerous precedent in favour of human rights. It really is too much to ask that they attempt to stop a genocide in Africa. If China were to do that, it would just be a matter of time before people will be bugging them to stop executing people for tax fraud or to create an independent judiciary.

ROBIN COLLUM
Sports Editor

Four Men and a Bobby



CONAL PIERSE

LETTERS

Things getting better for Listerites due to protest

I'm writing to say how proud I am of the residents of my former home for staging a successful protest against the Residence Services decision to eliminate FC elections (re: "Proposed Lister Hall changes curbed by protest," 7 February).

As a former FC myself (10 Henday 05/06), I know how important this process is to the student body and the democratic traditions of Lister. My kudos also go to University Vice President (Facilities and Operations) Don Hickey (and whoever else was directly involved) for listening to the students and repealing the order—which seems unnecessary due to the fact that they screen the election candidates anyways.

It seems they were citing the rise in offences as a motive for taking away elections. Compared to the time when my dad lived in Henday in the '70s, they have it quite a bit easier. For example, one entrepreneurial student stole a bathtub, took it to the roof, filled it with ice and beer, and then threw it off when finished. He was evicted after performing the feat a second time.

I hope that this instance leads to a more open mind on the part of Residence Services—they're lucky the ballot box doesn't determine their employment.

Again, well done Listerites!

DEVIN FROBB
Pharmacology V

Bobby loses day-planner, spurns student group

Bobby Samuel should be ashamed of himself (re: "Samuel censured by Exec, Council over unauthorized document," 7 February).

Near the end of January, Mr Samuel requested to attend a meeting of the Undergraduate Association of Computing Science (UACS) executive council to "give [us] an idea of the academic portfolio." We accepted his request on the assumption that it was SU business, an assumption that later turned out to be incorrect. On 3 February, he confirmed that he would indeed meet with us—a full five days after he was censured by the Students' Union Executive Council. We were unaware of this censure, and looked forward to his visit; however, he never gave any further response.

Flash-forward to 11 February—the day on which Mr Samuel was scheduled to meet with us. We waited for half an hour, but he never showed up.

So, shame on you, Bobby Samuel. UACS expected a certain amount of accountability from a Vice-President of the Students' Union. You dumped us, Bobby, and hell hath no wrath like a departmental association spurned. There are plenty of SU executives in the sea, Bobby. We'll move on to bigger and better things.

I hear Michael Janz is single. Maybe he'll make a presentation to us on legitimate pretenses, and we'll be the ones laughing.

LUCAS WAGNER
Computing Sciences I

Cars the real road danger

Thank you, Brian, for writing the article about what are usually called accidents and what you term vehicular manslaughter, and thanks to the *Gateway* for printing it (re: "Hitting a pedestrian is no accident, so the law shouldn't treat it as such," 7 February).

Like you, I'm tired of cyclists and pedestrians being told that being run down is their own fault, even when abiding the laws. I've read and thought about the idea that motor vehicles should be sold with stickers covering two thirds of their surface saying "driving kills."

Or, since some people like to equate bicycle helmets with accident prevention, there is the idea that cars could be required to wear giant helmets, preventing them from being driven around—the streets would become much safer.

A change of discourse around "accidents," calling the crime a crime and treating it as such, would be a good start.

ESTHERANNA STÄUBLE
Via email

Pamphlets a waste of University's green & gold

I recently received the U of A's neatly packaged centenary calendar of events in my staff mailbox. This glossy, colourful collection of archival photos and current research, along with a list of events taking place in the coming year, was delivered in a plastic case similar to

a CD package.

Am I to believe that the University is increasing tuition and residence fees and radically underfunding certain departments and faculties, yet they somehow have the financial resources to publish endless promotional materials and redesign university publications with a "100 Years!" logo that looks, well, embarrassingly amateur?

What did this promotional material cost in terms of both dollars and the number of trees destroyed? Who was paid to produce these image makeovers and celebratory materials? How do these enhance our students' experience (remember, that's why we're here)? Meanwhile, fees are on the increase, and some doctoral students in Arts, for example, have teaching loads of four courses in order to pay the bills—including their education.

Joining the ranks of the world's best universities indeed.

DANIEL MORLEY JOHNSON
PhD candidate

Letter from the present

Reading my 1979 letter reprinted last week in the *Gateway* reminded me of looking at my picture in my high school yearbook (re: "Letters from the archives," 5 February).

While it's even more obvious today that responsible sexual behaviour is an important moral issue, the way I expressed myself nearly 30 years ago seems as goofy to me now as my haircut in grade 10.

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