

Voter apathy won't solve landslides

LAST WEEK, STUDENTS WENT TO THE POLLS twice—once to choose our student leaders and once to officially welcome Ed Stelmach to Ralph's World. For the most part, both of these elections were massive landslides. This leaves the voting student with the question: why bother hitting the polls at all?

In the provincial arena, one has cause to feel disenfranchised. Monday's election saw the Tories' slim 53 per cent popular vote translate into a massive 87 per cent of the power. The one Liberal for every two Conservatives is effectively without representation—as is every ultraconservative Wildrose voter—proving how fundamentally broken our first-past-the-post system is.

These are the usual complaints though, and oft-cited reasons for not voting in Alberta. But you can stop whining about it on your blog, because there's still good reasons to take the time to participate in the democratic system—and like most things in life, it's about the little things.

At one point last Monday, Global was reporting Kevin Taft a mere one vote ahead of his PC counterpart, and I felt a sense of pride that that was my vote they were talking about. It didn't matter in the end, as he won by a goodly margin, but there was still that moment of being somewhat important in the grand democratic machine. More importantly, what if he had lost by my one vote? I'd feel like a downright schmuck for not getting up half-an-hour earlier, that's what.

The poor turnout in this year's SU elections is also somewhat understandable. There were no referenda or contentious issues of any sort—candidates' personal issues notwithstanding. Past SU elections have led to concrete changes in students' lives, as with the U-Pass, or, in some cases, the lack thereof, like the Coke "Yes" victory last year. Only Exec positions were up for grabs this time around, and those folks usually spend time on long-term causes, incorporating the direction from the previous Exec and working towards getting these issues on the table in front of students.

Most students don't know that the push for the U-Pass dates back even before the plebiscite of 2004 and was slowly forced along by each year's Exec before finally being approved by students last year.

Similarly, it took a few years for the SU to change the Powerplant from a severe fiscal quagmire into the current break-even business venture that is Dewey's. The Exec is more important than a referendum or plebiscite, but most students are justified in feeling that they won't see any immediate visible effect.

At the results announcement at Dewey's last Thursday, I was struck by another example of the difference of one vote. The race for vice-president (Student Life) was the only one not decided in a single round, and though Kristen Flath took first place with little trouble, Alena Manera lost to Sean McQuillan by one first-round vote. This demonstrates how, due to the vagaries of our preferential voting system, it's theoretically possible that the elimination of McQuillan could have led to Manera winning. It's not staggering electoral change, but it was real and there for all of us to see.

The point of voting isn't that you, individually, are guaranteed to make a change. The bureaucratic systems surrounding elected positions are sufficiently entrenched that they avoid any large changes from election to election.

Once in a lifetime, though, you may be that person that decides the outcome, and if you didn't bother to vote, you'll have missed your chance at the democratic jackpot.

MIKE OTTO
Photo Editor

Mascot remains lonely

GUBA was creeping
But he barked up the wrong tree
Bear in a headlock

CONAL PIERSE
Opinion Editor



MIKE KENDRICK

LETTERS

University not the only place for higher learning

I find it hard to believe that people feel you're lazy for working on your third and fourth degrees; it's work, but just of a different kind (re: "We shouldn't limit our knowledge," 6 March). What I disagree with, though, is your idea that all worthwhile knowledge can only be obtained at university.

Yes, you personally are working on a third and fourth degree, but can I tell you a little bit about a man I worked with this summer. His name is Ed. He's 42 years old and is one of the brightest minds I have discovered. He went to university for two years and then abandoned it to learn the way he wanted to and to live the way he wanted to.

He found what worked for him and didn't need a degree to say to the world that he values knowledge. Can we call him uneducated or not "advanced?" Can you not pursue knowledge by stepping into libraries, travelling, and learning by yourself or with other interested minds without a structured course?

Some people can't attend post-secondary for a variety of reasons, but should we see them all as uneducated (or not "formally educated") and not dedicated to discovering new things or valuing education? Some people I've talked to believe that once they step foot outside university with a degree in hand, they'll be considered by society as an expert in their field. This is something that limits our potential—believing that university is the only way to become truly knowledgeable.

I think if you really get to know people, [you'll find] that they're knowledgeable about things outside of what their focus was in school. Some of our classmates may be excellent writers, mountaineers, and know a great deal about metaphysics and not have learned any of it inside a classroom.

This does add to their ability to be a valuable contributor, as well as your degrees. So while we "shouldn't look down on someone who has the energy and patience to spend their lives learning," we shouldn't hold ourselves in so much esteem that we lose the ability to see what learning is and where it can happen.

APRIL ZEMBAL
Science IV

Alberta election not just a loss for Liberals

When discussing the "losers" of the provincial election, some say that they're the Liberals and NDP, and many say that they're the 58 per cent of Albertans that couldn't be bothered to vote; however, there's a third group of losers that are currently invisible: those Albertans that were being assisted by the constituency office staff of incumbent MLAs who lost their seats.

I had the great experience of working in a constituency office this summer. Not only does the office deal with large cases—some had over 300 pages of correspondence and documents—but they also have numerous ongoing cases.

I couldn't help but wonder: what happens to these files after an MLA is defeated? This morning I learned to my dismay that, typically, the files

are simply destroyed—talk about inefficiency. These constituents—many of whom are facing significant economic, social, or health problems—have to start the process all over again with the new office staff. They must fax those pages all over again and must again explain their history and situation to the new staff. Furthermore, there's no transition mechanism in place to facilitate a transfer of knowledge from outgoing to incoming staff.

Additionally, all documents are to be cleared from the office computer, meaning that community profiles, business directories, etc are deleted; although, this information will, undoubtedly, be required by the new staff.

This is ridiculously unproductive and needs to be made more efficient for the benefit of constituents.

ANNA HOPKINS
Arts III

I'm a creep; I'm a weirdo

The publishing of my letter last Tuesday has led to a skyrocketing in fame, and for that I'd like to thank you, Gateway (re: "Wait, they don't love you like I love you," 4 March).

Today, a girl in my class asked me if that was my letter, because it was pretty funny. That's right, pretty funny. "Why yes, would you like an autograph?" I replied. "Perhaps some oral sex? Who knows?" I of course didn't mean the oral sex part, I was just demonstrating my humour. She laughed nervously as she accepted my 8x10 glossy, but later I saw her furiously making out with it. This has happened hundreds of times.

I'm not merely going to use my

new-found status as one of the revered letter publishers to cash in, though there is a cereal (Stalker-Os) and an album deal in the mix—that reminds me, the Yeah Yeah Yeahs are suing us. Just a heads up. It's cool, my lawyers are all over it.

Point is, I haven't forgotten my purpose: the readership of Kelsey. The Mistress of the Blog must be worshipped, and who better to promote that than a celebrity? I once got a leather tickler as a joke gift for my birthday, and if I flick my wrist right, it turns into an awesome whip. I will use that to promote the faith to all the non-letter-publishing peons.

We will come together, build a statue, and I shall rule them with an iron whip (well, I guess a partially iron whip, since whips need to be flexible. I shall rule them with an iron-tipped whip—yeah, that's pretty badass). The faith will grow, and I will show them the way to paradise—through the medium of cyanide-laced Kool-Aid. Trust me, it's the only way.

GRAHAM ROBERTSON
Arts III

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