

SOCIAL SCIENCES QUARTERLY NEWSPAPER

FRONTLINE

WINTER 2005

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The Value of Your Opinion...

JIM MCKEOWN

A wise man once told me that opinions are like assholes: everybody's got one, and they all stink.

Now what this wise man said is very true. However, I've come to realize that he omitted telling me another big similarity between the two. Sure, assholes might stink, and everybody may have one; but, if you don't put yours to good use, well, needless to say, you'll be bloated, you'll be fat, you'll be grumpy and stressed, and according to Sigmund Freud, you'll be very shy (anal retentive, of course). Now to compare, if you don't put your opinion to good use on a regular basis, all of the above will apply, too.

Opinions may all stink, but they sure are valuable. It's a damn shame that people aren't as quick to express them anymore.

To me, Social Sciences' is the field of opinion. Here at McMaster, we have a fine field of opinion. Like all other schools, we study the tried, tested, and true opinions of some of history's greatest thinkers, in order to one day form our own opinions about things. The opinions we study are typically those of well to do European scholars from the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries, and of course, the Canadian "wanna-bees" who jock their styles; and this is why most of us enter into Social Sciences. We are all on the cusp of good grades but lack one important thing that drives us away from engineering, sciences or college: an opinion. So we take Social Sciences trying to form an opinion by analyzing other people's opinions. Unfortunately, by the time we are finished our study of opinions, we have considered too many opinions and cannot decide what our own opinion should be. Then, many of us are relegated to the voiceless class, an administrative hellhole, where we are forced to work, serving out other people's opinions. Well, my fellow social scientists, its time for us to wake up and put our assholes to use! We need to start farting out strong opinions, and make ourselves stronger for it!

It seems to me that academia hates the opinion. Probably because the powers that be want to keep their opinions as the status quo. This makes me laugh anytime I have to write an essay. I want to know, at what point in time, did this dungeon for creativity, begin to shackle the landscape of academic writing. I love thinking back to my first year tutorials and hearing those insightful questions around essay time: "Well, should it be five paragraphs?" Then there was "How many pages does it have to be again?" I mean is this really what the writers of the Renaissance, who innovated the essay, had in mind for this form of writing; or how about the great Enlightenment thinkers who perfected the essay? I

wonder if they would be impressed by anything today in academia; probably not. Academia is so uncreative and regressive it is laughable. This is especially true in the Social Sciences. Students are not taught to form their own opinions. Instead, we must form opinions about other people's opinions. And as a result, the occupation of philosopher is, for the most part obsolete in today's world. Social Sciences most practical occupation I think. But what great thinker ever said to abandon all original thought and only abide by past philosophies?

People bitch about propaganda all the time these days. CNN this, Michael Moore that. I find the biggest proponent of propaganda to be the one who coincidentally we confide our livelihood, knowledge, and thousands of dollars each year into: university. We put such a great deal of emphasis on textbooks and professors and theories and what not. When is the last time you had an original thought while reading through a social sciences textbook? The only logical reason to study social sciences is to apply it, not the theories we study, but the theories we form. For instance, great philosophers like Marx, Locke, and Sartre have already had their opinions implemented into real society. How come we still study them as if they haven't been then? How come we are always analyzing their work instead of focusing on our own? By taking Social Sciences, I have formed the opinion that political, social, economic, cultural, and religious philosophy died a long time ago; Social Sciences has relegated the student to the role of spectator. No wonder the media has taken over the world and control of our opinions. The people whom society has deemed as the authority on knowledge insist that knowledge must come from someone else, and not yourself; our own thoughts are inferior to professors and textbooks. So then, why shouldn't we believe everything that CNN tells us? Intellectual society teaches us to shy away from our own opinions. Well I think that stinks! Just like an asshole. I wonder whose opinion it was in the first place.

Anyway, we are all much better off if our opinions are strong and independent. We all need to form an opinion and express it in some way shape or form. Whether you say it, sing it, wear it, play it, walk it, write it, whatever; you'll be smarter and happier. The more you express your opinion, the more friends you'll have, because you'll be able to find people who share your opinion. And that's what we here at MSSS Frontline intend to do, give an opinion. And if you don't like it, well hey, that's your opinion, good for you for forming one!

So what's your opinion about that?

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MCMASTER'S QUESTIONABLE BUSINESS PARTNER CARL MEYER

Each time I walk through the Student Centre, with that ubiquitous cafeteria smell bullying my unfit student diet, Coca-Cola beckons me once again.

Each time I go through BSB to get to my locker, or walk down the halls of Ivor Wynne to the squash courts, I'm subjected to the bright red logo. The back of my official MSU handbook screams it out; the cashier at Union Market wears it right across his chest. And how can I forget last month, when they introduced their new 'low-cal' cola, and they brought a truck right into the courtyard outside the Student Centre, unambiguously handing out free cans.

Everywhere I go; Coke is right around the corner.

With most of us worried more about marks or extracurricular, it is easy for students to become somewhat detached from our surroundings. But we must stay alert that insulated environments like university campuses provide an ideal market for corporate giants. The major giant at Mac is Coca-Cola. Behind that bottle of Dasani that you grabbed this morning, while rushing to your tutorial, is a corporation that Reuters lists as a \$100 billion multinational enterprise, boasting 400 different brands, and a 50% global market share. Good for them, right?

What most students don't take into account is Coca-Cola's growing reputation for alleged connections with paramilitary groups, torturing union members, health and safety violations, and employee discrimination. Despite all the accusations, Coca-Cola continues to enjoy many long-term, exclusionary contracts with respectable institutions; McMaster being one. In my view, it is very disappointing that McMaster would partake in a contract that restricts students' access to alternative products. The aim of this article is to explore some of the negative findings on Coca-Cola, and thus question the benefit that an academic institution, such as Mac, gets from an exclusionary, long-term contract. As responsible consumers, students must take into account the corporate policies that they are supporting with every purchase.

McMaster's contract with Coke, according to campus Coke representative Irfaan Remtulla, is entirely private. An attempt two years ago to publicize the contract through a signature campaign was unsuccessful. The following are just a few examples of the allegations against Coke by human-rights institutions and activist organizations around the world.

I advise all readers to read through the evidence, follow the links, conduct further research, and reach your own conclusions about Mac's relationship with Coca-Cola.

First and foremost is the issue of Coke's bottling plants in Columbia. According to the International Labour Rights Fund, Coca-Cola contracts out its bottling operations to plants whose

workers are organized through the labour union SINALTRAINAL. In 2001, a lawsuit was filed by the ILRF on behalf of SINALTRAINAL, alleging that Coca-Cola was a knowing participant in paramilitary operations aimed at destroying union power in Coca-Cola bottling plants. The lawsuit, available on the ILRF website <http://www.laborrights.org>, outlines the story of Isidro Segundo Gil, a negotiator for SINALTRAINAL, who was murdered by paramilitary forces. The paramilitary group then threatened other employees into signing union resignation forms, coincidentally prepared beforehand, en masse, by the plant's manager.

The lawsuit also cites payments to paramilitary forces by a sales supervisor of another bottler associated with Coke. In addition, the lawsuit contends that Columbian troops allied with paramilitaries were trained at the U.S. Army's School of the Americas, and developed horrific anti-union tactics, including torture and murder of unionists and associated groups.

These tactics are cited in the Congressional Research Service's Report for Congress on this matter, obtainable at www.fas.org/irp/crs/RL30532.pdf.

...it is very disappointing that McMaster would partake in a contract that restricts students' access to alternative products.

In response to the lawsuit's allegations, Hiram Monserrate, a New York City Council member, led a delegation to Colombia to investigate the truth behind the situation. His findings from eyewitness accounts, available on his website <http://www.hirammonserrate.com>, indicate that company managers were well aware of paramilitary operations, yet did nothing to prevent them, and in some cases were active participants. Coca-Cola insisted to Mr. Monserrate's delegation that they had never investigated the ties between plant managers and paramilitaries. In fact, Coke officials have largely denied any association with the paramilitary forces in Columbia, even denying their existence. Many institutions have not bought Coca-Cola's plea of innocence, however. Since the lawsuit was filed, there have been sixteen separate boycotts of Coke products by schools, institutions and unions, the most recent being the California Federation of Teachers. Further links to information on these boycotts can be obtained on the website www.killercoke.org.

As well, Coke's bottling facilities in Florida have been responsible for hundreds of health and safety violations. As cited on the Teamsters' website,

www.teamster.org, in 2000, plant employees in Auburndale went on strike to protest mounting work-related health hazards. As a result, 140 union workers were fired, including every senior plant operator. This wave of layoffs came notwithstanding the news that the Occupation Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) had leveled 15 violations against the plant; citing plant evacuations, shutdowns, worker hospitalizations and complaints of air pollution. In 2001 and again in 2002, the OSHA cited many more safety violations, and in 2003 stated that a total of 96 separate Coke bottling plants had accident and illness rates at twice the U.S. national average.

Coke has also been involved in a class-action lawsuit filed by thousands of employees in Georgia over racially discriminatory labour standards. The lawsuit, featured on the Ontario Network for Human Rights website <http://www.geocities.com/CapitolHill/6174/coca-cola/complaint.html>, suggests evidence that Coke has directed stale products to African-American or Hispanic neighbourhoods. The lawsuit also contends that African-Americans are terminated at a much higher rate than Caucasians, lack mobility when employed, are subject to an arbitrary and racist evaluation system, are paid considerably less than other employees, and are given undue training assignments and compensation packages unrepresentative of their position.

In summary, this evidence represents only the tip of the iceberg. This article cannot fully tackle the multitude of worldwide allegations against the soft-drink manufacturer, ranging from Coke representatives sitting as PTA board members to violations of environmental laws in India. By providing Coke with a monopoly on campus, I believe McMaster is participating in extremely questionable corporate behaviour. As a McMaster student, I demand campus access to products produced by ethical, publicly accountable companies, and call for an end to the secrecy surrounding the McMaster Coke contract.

Carl Meyer is a third year Political Science major.

For more information about Coke's activities, please e-mail Carl at meyercj@mcmaster.ca, or get involved with The Campaign to Stop Killer Coke at www.killercoke.org.

BUT WHAT ABOUT OUR POOR AND STARVING CHILDREN?

It is an extreme tragedy, the recent events of the tsunami in South East Asia. But I want to ask, what about Canada? These past weeks have had such a focus on helping the victims of this natural disaster; yet I continue to wonder, what about everyone else? There is an AIDS crisis in Africa with thousands of people dying each year, but on campus I do not see tables upon tables trying to raise money for these people. Our own country, in fact our own city, is home to thousands of homeless people who cannot afford to eat and barely sustain their own lives and I ask, what are we doing to help them? Like I said, the tsunami was an incredible tragedy but why do people wait for a tragic natural disaster to care about an issue?

While in the Student Centre, I get asked to donate money for tsunami relief. When purchasing my books, I get asked to round up money for tsunami relief; even when I go to Commons I get asked to donate money from my meal plan for tsunami relief. And of course I donate, how can I say no to rounding-up 86 cents?

Then there was the one day, I remember it clearly. I was asked once again at Commons to donate and I refused. I felt that I was denying someone my canteen full of water in the desert; the people asking for money looked at me as if I was an inhumane piece of filth. I am not a cheap person, but when bombarded with tsunami relief campaigns all over the campus, I would rather take my money and donate it to a cause that is going to help people who are suffering in my own country and my own city.

I must nevertheless commend the amazing initiatives that are put forth by the students of this institution to help those suffering in South East Asia. These efforts show the amazing power that students on this campus have. But for now, I say let's start raising money for other causes that are not so apparent, a cause that may not involve 150 000 people dying at once, but one that can help those living in our own cities.

Composed by a third-year student in Honours Sociology.

BETWEEN HUMANS AND FROGS: PUTTING THE ACTION BACK INTO REACTION

SARAH DA SOUZA

Throughout history philosophers and scientists alike have struggled to theorize about the reasons for society's greatest problems. Example of this can be seen in literature concerning wars, subcultures, or environmental issues. Anything and everything we come across in our world can be theorized as problematic. Theory presents one to look at a problem, but where does the active-human response come into play? When we learn about how people overseas are killing one another because of war, and we think to ourselves "wow I'm glad I live in Canada", do we actually mean what we say? Are students becoming more of a passive recipient of knowledge without putting into practice what they are being taught? These questions are what I believe should be at the core of some social science courses (i.e. Sociology, Psychology, etc) but not just social sciences. The active-practice of what we learn can be extended to activism in relations to other faculties (Women's Studies or Peace Studies). When people come together, change is possible; education has always taught us this.

What I'm proposing to readers is that the ideas we learn in our classes are often empty words unless people put them into action. Speaking from first hand experience, in my sociology course we are taught about the mass media and its effects, as well as different theories which try to better our understanding of conflict, and war around the world. This is great and well worth the early mornings but I question the amount of people who actually care about what is going on around the world, and even at home. Just walk through the student center for five minutes. Amongst the vendors and food stores we find booths set up to try and persuade us to open our minds to the problems our society is facing. Not too long ago we had several booths presented by JSA (Jewish Students Society) as well as MacWyn (McMaster Womyn's Network-Gender Equity) to try and bring awareness to several pertinent issues. Now, one may argue that it's great to bring awareness to the community but since the issues do not directly affect us, then there is no point in being active and doing something worth a cause. I firmly disagree with this, and I find that activism in any form is being dramatically overlooked today by the majority of society. After all what is a community without the participation of all of its members?

Here at McMaster we like to use the theme of "One Mac". It's heard constantly during Welcome Week and throughout the year to bring students together under a common-cause-education and community. How often do we actually get together and celebrate diversity, community, and education? Well, you might ask what I mean by celebration. I like to think of a quote by one of my favourite bands Incubus: "floating in this cosmic Jacuzzi/we are like frogs oblivious/ to the water that's starting to boil/ no one flinches, we all float face down/" (from "warning"-Morning View). If we all live our lives disregarding "the water," then we don't live in regards to others. Eventually we will all become frogs floating "face down" in the water. I believe that so much more can be done in regards to creating a better world for us. I may seem naive, idealistic, or even unrealistic to some; but then again what's wrong with wanting the best for humanity? What's wrong with trying to change the world one step at a time? What's wrong with giving a damn for a change and not perpetuating the status quo?

Many people have already begun to challenge society's "correct" way of living; often this results in a hardship in other areas of their life. But the fact is that those people, (and you too), can change the world. We can all create "One Mac" by doing the simple things. The next time you get cut off by a frantic student trying to park, just relax, it's not the end of the world. If you find someone being the center of a cruel joke, speak up; people often don't realize the power of words until it's too late. But most of all question what you are taught, and put into practice the words you learn if you truly believe in them. I see the mind as a bottle of butterflies: unleash the contents of the bottle and you free not only your mind but also your spirit. Unleash the spirit within you, even if just on a small scale. Just like a butterfly flapping its wings across the ocean, you too can evoke change in the world, one flap at a time.

Sarah da Souza is a student in the faculty of Social Sciences.

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MEET THE REAL KENNETH TAYLOR

JIM MCKEOWN

Kenneth Taylor Hall has long fortified the image of Social Sciences for McMaster students. Home to the Departments of Gerontology, Health Studies, Political Science, Economics, Labour Studies, and Sociology, KTH, the hip acronym it has come to bear, is sort of like McMaster's Mecca of social theory. Soc Sci students race through the halls each day, savoring what they have already learned, pumped about what they might learn next. Needless to say, KTH is certainly a happy place, a wonderland of sorts, for up and coming social scientists at McMaster.

However, Kenneth Taylor Hall has had an exceptionally negative impact on at least one student: a third year Political Science major named, ironically enough, Ken Taylor.

"I came to McMaster in pursuit of a BA. I was planning on going to Carlton for journalism after I graduated. Now I'll probably need years of therapy before I can resume my dream," he told me recently. This is because for the past three years; the 21 year old from Newmarket has not been able to live the ordinary life of an undergrad student at Mac. Sharing the same name as his faculty hot spot's inspiration, the young man has been thrust into celebrity status. Many Soc Sci students believe he is a miracle worker because of his name. Many believe he knows every single answer to any problem every discussed in Social Sciences. This has led to overwhelming attention.

"I get a lot of cards and letters in the mail, from students asking for thesis ideas and what have you. A lot of times people will just stop me in the street and start bowing down in front me. The odd time I've even had people try and take me into exams with them, just to stand there and watch over them. People think I'm a God or something."

But isn't this a good thing? One would think that most Social Sciences' students crave power, so why does Ken Taylor not embrace it?

"Well, there are some benefits. Like for example, first year chicks are always looking to give it up to me. They all want to be able to say 'Ken Taylor thinks I'm hot,' or whatever. Mind you, by the time second and third year rolls around, they spend most of their time in the library, so they all start looking for dudes named Mills." But then Taylor was quick to reiterate, "On a whole though, being Ken Taylor is not all its cracked up to be."

So what lesson does the story of Ken Taylor teach us all in the end? To paraphrase his own thoughts on the matter, "there is more to a person than just his name." He then adds, "KTH is a great building, named after a great guy, but it's just not what I want to be remembered for. It's not what I want panicky Social Sciences' students and first year chicks remembering me for."

An inspirational message; to say the least.

Jim McKeown is a second year Political Science major.

SHOW ME BOOBS, DRUGS AND VIOLENCE

RYAN BUKOSKI

Many television viewers around the world are exposed to hundreds of channels containing endless hours of entertainment. These channels range in genres and content. Many are the standard local stations while many others are known as specialty channels of shows about a particular genre whether it be home improvement, food or golf. Despite the broad choice in channel selection, a few citizens in our society have chosen to ruin it for the rest of us.

The media has been inundated with complaints regarding the content shown on these channels. From bare breasts to the occasional swear word and references to sex, it seems that nothing can be shown on TV without a whiner. These individuals who deem it necessary to complain are missing out on the fun in life. The Parents Television Council (PTC) strives itself to rid the television of sex, violence and profanity. Yet, their efforts could be better used turning off their TV set and taking their kids outside for a nice healthy walk to the park.

The problem with television complainers today is that they do not know how to operate the remote control. Despite popular belief, viewers do not have to sit there and watch the same show. There are plenty of other channels available for viewing, believe it or not. The remote control even contains an off button. This could be handy if a viewer finds it necessary to censor themselves from the content presented.

In recent news, one viewer from Cleveland, Ohio, is suing the makers of Fear Factor on NBC for making contestants eat dead rats. The man threw up while the segment aired and is now asking for damages. This brings the question, where was the man when the disclaimer was displayed? Where was this man when Fear Factor made other contestants eat maggots, testicles and other delicacies on previous shows? Did this man not buy a TV with an off button? Lighten up and stop wasting the time and money of others.

Sponge Bob has also been in the news recently regarding a non-profit video produced by the We are Family Foundation. To be viewed in 61 000 American schools, this video is intended on encouraging diversity and tolerance in society. We would think that tolerance and diversity in society would be a good thing. A group of people should not be shunned as long as they are not physically harming others. According to a far right-wing Christian group, called the American Family Association (AFA), these characters are being used to promote homosexuality as unacceptable. The last time I checked, gays are human beings just like the rest of us. They should not be portrayed as second class citizens. The AFA should be ashamed of themselves, as their viewpoint is no different from forcing blacks to ride the back of the bus. The world has come along way since then; we have accomplished so much just to throw it away.

The above controversies have been worrying media outlets. Afraid of out cries from “concerned

parents” and hefty fines from the government, these networks have taken upon themselves to filter questionable content. A Family Guy episode featuring a cartoon butt is being blurred. What is so wrong about a butt? Most people have a couple of butt cheeks. But to our surprise the Parents Television Council is one of the reasons for this action. Now, once questionable content hits the air, the PTC calls upon its near-million member base to submit written complaints to the FCC and other government officials in the United States. Even better, these members do not have to lift a pen or walk to a mailbox. A simple click of a mouse with their asses glued to their chair is all that is needed to send a complaint directly from the PTC website.

It is scary to think of a television-world without censors. Parents might actually have to turn the television off and send their kids to play. It is not safe to let the television be a babysitter with all of the “evil” content on television. These “responsible” parents should know this. Please do me and other paying television views a favour and stop ruining the fun for everyone. If I want to see bare breasts while guys curse and swear and talk about sex, I should be able to.

Ryan Bukoski is a first year Social Sciences student and the Vice President of Finance for the MSSS.

BEYOND THE MCDONALD'S DRIVE-THRU

AMANDA POKOYOWAY

December. A word that signifies the end of classes and the beginning of the holidays. Holidays. Another word that signifies some not-so-pleasant memories for many students. You'd think that the holidays were equated with the idea of a time for relaxation. You've finished your finals, gone home to indulge in delicious dinners, and accept piles of presents. You get to see Grandma, Uncle Joe, Aunt Marla, and Cousin Billy for the first time in a year. You look forward to an engaging family affair at the dinner table on Christmas Day; with turkey, gravy, dinner rolls and plates of after-dinner sweets. But just when you thought your stomachache would be caused by a sugar-overload, think again. You would normally feel safe from interrogation as your family has a tendency to take a profound interest in discussing neighbours' problems. This week's gossip: next-door neighbour Tom's, recent divorce. You feel safe, protected by Tom's failure at life. Phew. There is no way to link divorce to your lack of direction at school. Finally, victory is mine!

Little did I know that the tables would turn.

The topic switches, initiated by your lovely Auntie Marla's attempt to link Tom's divorce debt-load to your attempt at getting an undergraduate education in Social Sciences: “Now honey, what kind of job do you plan on getting with a degree in Social Sciences? How will you support yourself? You don't want to end up broke like the neighbour do you?”

Can you relate? Does your family constantly pressure you to switch majors?

Do you have friends in Engineering or Science programs? Do they ever taunt you by humming the McDonald's theme song and chasing you around with a greasy spatula?

Do you ever feel ashamed to admit that you are in Social Sciences?

Look no further. The next time your family tries to compare you to the broke and divorced neighbour, or your engineer friends buy you slip-proof shoes for your birthday, show them this article, rub it in their face, and tell them how proud you are to be in Social Sciences.

You might ask, “What can I do with a degree in Social Sciences?” The question should really be, “what can't I do with a degree in Social Sciences?”

The various programs in the Faculty of Social Sciences at McMaster can prepare us for specific professions, but this is not always the case. Juggling three or four years of classes with jobs, volunteer work and a social life helps us develop necessary life skills, such as time management, organizational skills and more academic skills such as the ability to think critically and rationally, evaluate arguments and communicate effectively. We learn to express ourselves through written and verbal forms, and propose and develop arguments. While developing these pertinent life-skills, we get to specialize in an academic area of choice. As the current Dean of Social Sciences, Susan Elliot mentions, “...a university education in Social Sciences is as much about skill development as it is about content. And the skills you develop in Social Sciences are highly valued by employers.”

“...a university education in Social Sciences is as much about skill development as it is about content. And the skills you develop in Social Sciences are highly valued by employers.”

Think that taking a Social Science program is a waste of time? Think again. Many students who complete a B.A. go on to amazing careers in law, public service, media, medicine, academia, and business. I don't know if it's just me, but that seems to cover a pretty huge range of careers.

As much as they hate to admit it, engineers are just as reliant on us for our abilities as we are reliant on their bridges. When your bridges collapse and you need psychological counseling to cure your depression, who are you going to turn to? A Psych grad. When you get sued for killing the people on the bridge, you'll need one of us to save your ass from the legal system. And finally, engineers need someone to tell them where to place the bridge: an urban planner.

So you've graduated with your B.Eng degree; whoop-dee-friggin-doo. What are your career options? You don't really have any options, now do

you? You can enter the exciting career of being an engineer. You can spend your life drawing blueprints in a secluded basement and working-out mathematical equations. Sounds like a good time for a hermit.

A B.A. in a Social Sciences program, however, can open doors to unique careers that are often left in the dark:

•Geography: Climatologist, Urban Planner, Transportation Manager

•Sociology: Mental Health Worker, Social Policy Analyst, Corrections Officer

•Political Science: Policy Analyst, Congressional Researcher

•Anthropology: Field Archeologist, National Site Interpreter, Lab Assistant

•Communication Studies: Editor, Public Relations, Consultant.

With a diverse range of employment opportunities and a chance to develop your teamwork, analytical, research and communication skills, graduates of Social Sciences are highly successful, adaptable and flexible employees. The next time you question the real-life application about your Social Sciences education, just remind yourself that if it wasn't for Social Science, you'd be stuck in a rotting basement designing bridges for the rest of your life.

Information on careers provided by McMaster University Career Services and the University of North Carolina Career Services web page (<http://www.uncw.edu/stuaff/career/>).

Amanda Pokoyoway is a third year Honours Communication Studies student and the Vice President of Administration for the MSSS.

WHERE HAS ALL THE SPIRIT GONE?

ANDY MOONSAMMY

While contemplating what I should write about for this issue of the Frontline, I had to take a moment to find the right subject that would make for an interesting read. Traditionally there are articles outlining and commenting on the news and events in Social Sciences from the president's perspective. The target audience being Social Sciences students, I thought I would spare you the lengthy article thought provoking and informative.

I proceeded to think about what issues (from my perspective) the Social Sciences public needed to know about. There were a variety of issues to choose from including the usual under funding of Social Sciences relative to other academic divisions, but such an issue has received attention in the past. I realized that I should write about something that is closer to home, an issue that is relevant to the McMaster Social Sciences Society (MSSS). The main item I would like to focus on is student spirit within the Faculty of Social Sciences and the effect the lack of it has on student led activities.

From my vantage point, the level of spirit is slowly deteriorating. Year after year, the organization I am currently part of, the MSSS, receives minimal interest in the programming it organizes. At the current rate of decline, in a few short years student spirit could be completely diminished. Spirit is a very important aspect of a student's life and experience. In terms of this issue and its relation to my role, I am concerned because the resources that are funded by the money of Social Students are going underutilized. In addition to underused resources, there is a general lack of interest in the process that decides how resources (monies) are directed to certain projects. After considering the issue, the lack of spirit from Social Sciences has very serious and important consequences and must be addressed as soon as possible. Students from the general Social Sciences need to take steps to ensure that they are getting the most out of their experience, as well as having a hand in guiding the process that controls the usage of funds they have provided.

In order to find a solution to the lack of spirit, it would be wise to first understand the potential causes for such a problem. Some have attributed the size of the faculty as a cause for the lack of spirit. Social Sciences is the largest faculty at Mac, comprised of over ten different departments. With its size, there is a considerable difference between the departments and fields of study. However, before proceeding I should remind you that there is connection on the larger scale between the academic departments, but at the same time someone in Political Science might

not necessarily be familiar with content taught in Anthropology. As a result of this variance in the fields of study that make-up Social Sciences, students may have more pride for their department rather than the greater faculty. This is the first reason for a lack of pride for Social Sciences in general.

Another reason the decline in spirit may be the mindset that is attached to an arts education; some critics would lead us to believe that the only future in a Social Sciences field is flipping burgers at a local McDonalds or fast food outlet. When such a negative outlook regarding one's future is present, naturally a student may feel less important or even start to believe the stereotypes, in turn, diminishing their attitude toward their faculty. Such a bleak outlook is of course unfounded.

A potential solution to solve all of the problems that degrade students' morale and spirit is to bring students together and provide experiences where they can socialize and reflect upon their education in Social Sciences. At McMaster, several initiatives have addressed the problem using the technique just mentioned. An example is the Experiential Education Initiative (EE). The EE team, consisting of approximately three full time staff, works diligently during summer months and harder during the academic year to help students realize their potential. Events such as MacServe (primarily based on service learning), Job Shadowing opportunities, as well as career planning courses, provide Social Sciences students with opportunities to explore their potential and provide tangible examples of what a Social Sciences degree provides. The results are outstanding as students see that a background in the Social Sciences enables you to make a tremendous impact on the world.

During my three years at McMaster, Experiential Education has been going strong but the problem of low attendance at student run events remains and the diminishing spirit continues to trouble the Social Sciences Society. During the election period for student executive positions, some executive positions are left open while others are filled by acclamation; in my view, this shows a lack of interest and lack of spirit. Although organizations such as Experiential Education inspire and cultivate some interested students who are filled with pride, a large number of students are still not utilizing the resources they fund.

Earlier I mentioned that I would leave you with something that's thought provoking. I am not sure if I have accomplished that thus far but I would like to add to my message, and hopefully my ending

point will be provoking.

The Social Sciences Society has an annual budget usually ranging anywhere between \$50,000 and \$70,000. In my view this a substantial amount of money; all of which directly originates from student fees. As the Society carries out its mandate and organizes events, I feel that students should take advantage of the activities that are presented. Social Sciences students should involve themselves and even demand more by aggressively utilizing the resources they fund, as well as be proud and spirited of their faculty.

There are many reasons to be proud and spirited. In order to be a leader of the nation, or even the world, a background in Social Sciences is necessary. Our faculty helps to explain where society has been and where it is going. Our real power does not lie in our ability to design a structure, or balance the books, but to foresee the problems of the future and offer solutions that are beneficial and equitable. I believe that these reasons are enough to be proud of our faculty. In the event where students still have reservation about faculty pride or have not cause to be spirited, I would urge such individuals to at least demand more from their student fees investment and utilize the resources that are provided.

The McMaster Social Sciences Society with its substantial budget has the ability to fill a niche that is currently wide open, but in order to do so, more students need to be more spirited, and overt express interest in their faculty, in their investment.

Andy Moonsammy is a third year Political Science major.

For more information on the McMaster Social Sciences Society and on how you can get involved, contact us:

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THE POLITICS OF ACHIEVEMENT

ZAC SPICER

If you ask most people about the McGuinty Liberals' achievements after nearly sixteen months in office and they will most likely note the health care premium usually after a quick complaint and some profanity. In fact, ask most Liberal supporters and they will, most likely, respond the same way.

But the fact is that the Ontario Liberals have done much more than take additional money from our pay checks. Education was a major part of the Liberals campaign in October of 2003 and they have delivered on their promises. Since taking office the McGuinty government has increased funding for public education by \$854 million this year, as well as adding \$112 million to help struggling students learn to read, write, and do math.

Also, they've added more meat, air, and water inspectors to ensure that the Walkerton tragedy will never happen again. They've frozen development in the GTA greenbelt, ensuring that future generations can enjoy trees, parks, and clean air as opposed to unstoppable urban sprawl. They've strengthened our democracy by instituting fixed election dates. Plus, they've lowered auto insurance rates and raised the minimum wage.

Health care was not left out of these improvements. The extra money siphoned from our pockets is going somewhere. Since taking office the Liberals have hired an additional 2,400 nurses, are opening nine new MRI facilities, increased funding for home care to \$1.3 billion, and increased hospital budgets by \$469.5 million. In total, our health care system in Ontario will deliver an additional 36,000 heart procedures, 9,000 cataract surgeries, and 2,300 hip replacements, a drastic improvement.

The public rarely ever hears of these improvements because the Liberals banned partisan government advertising, a trick the PC's used numerous times to sell their policies to a weary public.

Of all the changes that have occurred in this province one of the most important has been the change in management style. The PC's under Mike Harris and Ernie Eves used confrontation, fear, and conflict to incite change. They challenged the teachers, doctors, nurses, and other public sector employees in order to gut social services. They devalued and dehumanized the poor and disadvantaged in order to cut their welfare payments so they could cut taxes for corporations. Protests at Queens Park were frequent and the government was constantly at odds with the public.

The Liberals have changed these scenarios. Before constructing their first budget they traveled the province to gather advice and input from the public. They have listened to the community on such issues as 407 billing and the pit bull ban. Instead of getting into conflict with the public, they have included them.

Over all the Liberals have been vilified by most because the majority of the public does not know the good they've done for the province. The betterment of all Ontarians is the top priority of Dalton McGuinty, which is evidenced by the way in which he risked his political career by implementing an unpopular health care premium – a move most politicians wouldn't have done. In the recent tsunami disaster, McGuinty quickly pledged \$5 million in aid and sent top health officials to help with relief, showing the character of a man who could have sat back and said this wasn't a provincial matter. Dalton McGuinty is a humanitarian, a social activist, and one of the best leaders that Ontario has ever had. Plus, he froze your tuition.

So, the next time someone asks you about the Ontario Liberals you can do more than complain about the health care premium.

Zac Spicer is a first year Social Sciences student.

BELOW THE POVERTY LINE

L. W.

For most students, including myself, one of the biggest stresses concerning their education is trying to figure out how they are going to pay for it. Most students are able to turn to OSAP for this funding, however; OSAP is far from being adequate and fair.

The number one issue with OSAP is the fact that many students who need OSAP are not receiving it either because their parents make too much money or they themselves have made too much money. While some parents do offer their children money to pay for school there are still those whose parents do not give them a cent for their education. I also know of students who were previously given the full amount offered by OSAP who did not find it adequate for paying all of their expenses, who sought part time jobs only to have their OSAP funding reduced anyways. This then leads us to the fact that the maximum amount that was offered to OSAP students this year was 8,800 dollars (which I myself was given) and I worked a normal full time job this summer which gave me an additional almost \$5,500. If you do the math the total amount is \$14,300. If you then take into account all of my necessary expenses including housing, tuition, books and food that reduces that amount to 65 dollars a week for miscellaneous expenses. Now this is only if you are a tremendously good at managing your money, which I, for one, am not.

The existence of a student is pretty bleak. If you look at what Stats Canada refers to as the low income cut-off (LICO), also known as the poverty line is around 16,000 dollars for a single person living in Hamilton (I am aware of how

controversial any measure of poverty is I am just taking this as a general indicator). As students we are basically living at or below the poverty level.

Also, my OSAP funding was decreased this year from the previous year almost 300 dollars. When I enquired as to why this was the answer I was supplied with was that we have one less week of school this year. Now does that justify taking \$300 dollars off of our loans? That was almost a whole month's rent deducted from my entitlement simply because we had ONE less week of school. All of this comes about after I heard that OSAP funding was going to be looked at and reviewed, I was hoping that things would get better but they have not.

What really angers me is that we have to pay this money back anyway, so why are there so many restrictions? I believe that if you are a student in university and have decent grades and are serious about your education and future it would only benefit the government to make funding more accessible to all students. Each student should be allowed to estimate the amount that they will require for their time at school and this should be taken into account. A parent's income should not be taken into consideration either. When a person turns eighteen they are considered an adult, so why is a parents income still assessed after this point? In essence, I believe that less worry and stress put towards financing your education may in fact help you concentrate more on your studies.

L. W. is a third year Political Science student.

WELCOME WEEK 2005

GET INVOLVED! BE A SOCIAL SCIENCES WELCOME WEEK REP!

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REFLECTIONS: A SERIES OF POEMS

ANTHONY KUPFERSCHMIDT

Frosted Glass

Bundled snugly
peering a tiny eager eye
through slight scratchings on the window
and out into the falling snow
conjuring an unbroken trail
winding between and around the trees
Racing out into the sharp cold
leaving flawless angels
and twisting lines and loops of bootprints
cavernous across the yard
Back behind the brief patterns of frost
forming of his own breath on the glass
watching his undertakings vanish
in a vagrant blizzard of white and grey.
His smile seems stifled in his snowsuit.

power

we step out of houses
away from silent receivers
we step out of cars
away from the slopping in the tank
to direct traffic
as the echo of rushing sirens
communicates movement and meaning
crowding the stillness of the city with wonder
and uniting us in action where proximity and power have failed

words exchanged

bookended between fantasy and fiction
while his shop leans between a convenience store and a pizzeria
the elderly man behind the till
sits straight and still
shelved with a fine layer of dust settled on his smooth head
and a hardcover face
yellowing
illegible
and bound in tacit stories.
as i trek unspeaking from tome to tome
he consents to my conversing with his old familiars
and we reserve our words exchanged for the topic of change.