

# CASA not all it's cracked up to be

Past execs were right to kick it to the curb, and we shouldn't go crawling back



SCOTT  
LILWALL

Student politics are not like the dating scene at times: most of those involved are nervous and awkward, and occasionally, fancy suits are worn. And just like romantic entanglements, sometimes you fall in with the wrong partner, one that you eventually realize you were better off not getting in bed with. But even worse than finding yourself paired with this heartbreaker is when you go crawling back to that bad relationship on your hands and knees.

This is pretty much the situation facing the Students' Union now, with Vice-President (External) Steven Dollansky pushing for a big second chance with the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations (CASA). Both Dollansky and SU President Michael Janz have argued that joining CASA, a group that lobbies the federal government on behalf of students, would give the University of Alberta a presence on the national stage. With the SU Exec propping up student loans as one of this year's hot issues, getting heard at the federal level is going to be high on the list of priorities—one that the Exec seems willing to pay CASA's steep membership fee to achieve.

This isn't the first time that we've reconsidered our relationship with CASA—the U of A was a founding member of the group back in 1995. The honeymoon soon ended, however, as the SU began to feel that the

organization was ineffective and wasn't quite listening to its needs. Counselling was tried, and a conference held with McGill's SU yielded a number of recommendations for changes. Unfortunately, our SU soon learned that sometimes you just can't change a federal lobbying body. By 2002, they decided to dump CASA, and have stayed out of federal matters since.

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One has to ask why we are discussing a reconciliation now—it's not as if CASA has really changed their ways or become all that more effective. In fact, the two main activities of the alliance still remain pretty much the same: sustaining the childish rivalry with its arguably more radical cousin, the Canadian Federation of Students, and being involved in scandal.

When not dealing with embezzlement schemes and succession scandals, CASA puts together meetings with federal politicians and attempts to raise awareness of education issues in Ottawa. The problem is that postsecondary education is the territory of the provincial government, and that's where the

U of A's advocacy efforts should lie.

Despite having its own flaws, the Council of Alberta University Students (CAUS) has been focused on lobbying the province, where decisions can have a real impact on the costs of education and living for students. Representing around 60 000 students in Alberta, CAUS has the heft to make education an issue for Premier Stelmach and the opposition come election time.

In contrast, with war, economy, and environment sucking up all the attention on the federal level, there's only so much pull that a group like CASA can have. Stephen Harper didn't even bother to mention education, post-secondary or otherwise, in last week's Throne Speech; perhaps more tellingly, none of the other parties really mentioned the omission.

The talk of hooking up with CASA again strikes one as nothing but posturing from Janz and Dollansky. It's an easy way to look like you're sticking it to the government and raising awareness without putting in much effort. The truth is that CASA isn't aging gracefully, and is losing suitors left and right. The universities of Saskatchewan and Manitoba recently wrote the organization their Dear John letters, and none of the schools in British Columbia have ever found her that attractive.

While things may change and the federal level certainly might become a good target in the future, at the moment it remains an expensive distraction from the work that the SU is doing at the provincial level. Instead of spreading resources thin by playing the field, we should settle down and focus on provincial gains first. Because in the end, we don't gain much by hooking up with the old flame—just a lot of heartache.

# Trying to make God a fact just takes away from faith



PAUL  
KNOECHEL

While there have been many enemies of faith to come and go over the years, the most threatening and insidious have persisted in their mission to disprove God's existence. I speak, of course, about the creationists. Those who carry the torch of creationism are trying to trap God in a burning windmill, and it's time something changed.

For those of you who are removed from the struggle, you're perhaps confused, though this simply stems from a misunderstanding about the nature of faith. Douglas Adams perhaps summed it up the best in a conversation between man and God in one of his books.

In the dialogue, God refuses to prove his existence as "proof denies faith, and without faith, [He is] nothing." However, the existence of the Babelish contradicts this, as "it could not have evolved by chance," and therefore, proves that there's a higher power. A fact that causes God to disappear in "a poof of logic."

By this same logic, all you need to do is prove the theory of creationism, and in doing so, you destroy God.

What isn't obvious is why creationists are so bent on the destruction

of God. They seem to be the type of people that would want God to exist, but all the while they're fighting the idea of evolution, which is simply God's way of covering his tracks.

God is under attack in various ways. Entire museums have been built in the name of creationism. While they try to promote a family atmosphere, allowing children to frolic with dinosaurs in the Garden of Eden, those who look deeper see the truth. These are nothing but glorified bunkers against the divine, using their animatronic dinosaurs as foot soldiers to man the front lines.

What's worse is that intelligent design is now being taught alongside evolution in some science classes south of the border. They're doing the unthinkable by turning science against God. People sometimes don't realize that God gave us science so that we could explain things for ourselves without the need to involve him. This ensured that the divine would be safe for another day. Now, God must fear his very tool of concealment being used against him.

But this may yet be God's rallying cry. So I implore all of you: use science, reason, logic, and every other deductive power at your disposal to explain the world around you. Ruin the mystery of a rainbow for a child; reduce the wonder of a night sky to physics for your friends; point out the lack of proof for the soul to the elderly. Perhaps, with some effort, we can make it impossible to prove the existence of God. Then we can finally keep him where he belongs: to ourselves.

## THE BURLAP SACK

This edition of the Burlap Sack goes out to those of you still going to RATT and clogging SUB's woefully inadequate elevators in the process. This beating could be dispensed for obviously selfish reasons—after all, the Gateway's offices are on the third floor, serviced exclusively by said elevators—but nay, this beating is warranted because the Students' Union has finally provided a decent alternative, Dewey's, which is now actually a real restaurant.

Thanks to the closure of the 'Plant, RATT is so busy that it takes 20 minutes to get service, a completely arbitrary amount of time for the food to show up, and another 20 to get the bill. Good luck getting your food warm.

In case you haven't tried Dewey's menu, I'll let you know right now that it's friggin' delicious. A pound of sweet potato fries can be had for mere dollars, and the nachos are best described as mountainous. And like RATT, Dewey's has a full selection of delicious alcohols.

There's no good reason to frequent RATT when Dewey's has a superior menu, quicker service, and similar prices. So, into the sack RATT patrons, and after the beating, into the elevator. You may be stuck there a while.

MIKE OTTO

*The Burlap Sack is a semi-regular feature where a person or group who needs to be put in a sack and beaten is ridiculed in print. No sack beatings are actually administered.*



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