

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

SOCIETY FOR ACADEMIC  
FREEDOM AND  
SCHOLARSHIP

## OPEN LETTER

February 13, 2006  
Dr. Wade MacLauchlan  
President, UPEI  
Charlottetown, PEI  
C1A 4P3

Dear President MacLauchlan:  
I am writing to you as president of the Society for Academic Freedom and Scholarship. We are a national organization of university faculty members and interested others who are dedicated to the defence of academic freedom and reasoned debate. For further information, please visit our website at [www.safs.ca](http://www.safs.ca).

We are writing to strongly protest the actions of the UPEI administration in seizing copies of the student newspaper, *The Cadre* (issue dated February 8), and preventing their distribution. UPEI's public statement of February 8 that censorship of *The Cadre* can be justified "on grounds that publication of the caricatures represents a reckless invitation to public disorder and humiliation" is contrary to the duty of all university presidents to maintain their campuses as places where debate of controversial issues may take place. Fear of possible 'mob action' must not be allowed to dictate to UPEI or any other Canadian university what ideas its students and faculty may express, disseminate and debate. By censoring this debate at your campus rather than taking the necessary steps to provide appropriate security to allow debate to happen, you have encouraged the view that the threat of violence, real or imagined, is an effective way to challenge ideas with which one disagrees.

The decision as to what is to be included in a newspaper must be made by the editorial board, based on their understanding of the newsworthiness of the story. Those who disagree with the newspaper's coverage or viewpoint can register their opposition through writing letters to the editor, demonstrating, or simply by refusing to read the paper or to advertise in it. Disagreeable speech should be countered by opposing arguments. Censorship is not an acceptable response to the expression of contrary opinions, and especially not on a university campus. Sending the campus police to confiscate copies of

the student newspaper is an overreaction and a victory for potential censors who seem to have intimidated the administration of UPEI.

UPEI has given the impression that vigorous debate is to be avoided whenever offence may be taken, or at the very least that such debate is to occur only on terms decided by the university administration. Surely, this is not the image of UPEI that you want to promote.

We call on you to reverse your decision and to let *The Cadre* do its job.

Sincerely,  
Clive Seligman  
President

CC: Ray Keating, Editor, *The Cadre*

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To the Staff of *The Cadre*:

Please accept my congratulations for your intrepid actions in reprinting the Danish cartoons. So many of us have seen what much of the media actually stand for in the face of real threats to free speech. You have been one of the few examples of those willing to face a true test of free speech in the West. Thank you for informing your readers of the content of this recent controversy.

All the best!  
Dr. Jack L. Edwards  
Toronto, ON

You have my full support in attempting to have those "famous" cartoons published. My only word for the whole

controversy is "pathetic". If we begin running our affairs on the basis of what might offend someone in some other culture we are in a sorry state indeed. I remember with clarity the fuss (and fatwa) over Salmon Rushdie's book several years ago and the fury that I felt when our own government initially placed a "stop import" order on it.

The first thing I did when it did become available was to go out and buy a copy.

Where was the "moderate" Muslim community then and where is it now? If they want to get some respect from me (and many others) they had better start reigning in their fanatics. The distinction between them seems rather blurred to me. Can you imagine us pandering to our own crowd of extremists when they come out with their own drivel (such as the world having been created a few thousand years ago)?

All the best,  
Scott Cunningham

My name is Anthony Hampton, I ran the *Argosy* at Mt. A for the 2002-2003 publishing year in my 2nd year.

I read about *The Cadre* publishing the cartoons on [cbc.ca](http://cbc.ca) (I live in Japan, so I am amazed I heard at all), and then I read your editorial on *The Cadre*'s website. I just wanted to say that I think you did the right thing. I am sure something of a storm has unfolded around you and *The Cadre* of late. Looking back at my time at the *Argosy*, I am certain of only one thing: it was well worth it when we made a stand, and I wish we had done it even more often.

Best wishes,  
Anthony Hampton

You acted in a reckless and irresponsible way by trying to publish the cartoons. I suspect that you do not fully appreciate the dynamics of the current controversy or its extreme volatility. There is no real free press issue involved with the cartoons. There are just people (on both sides) who are trying to use the cartoons to further a political agenda. For the Danish paper and the European copy cats, it's a pretext for Muslim bashing. For radical islamists, it's a pretext for promoting benladenism. Furthermore, the prohibition against images or statues or statues is not really a major factor either. It has become a factor because

in this case the images are associated with defamation of the Prophet. Just yesterday, the Committee on American Islamic Relations (CAIR) reminded us that several years ago there was a request for removal of the statue of Muhammad that has been part of the frieze on the front of the U.S. Supreme Court since 1935. That frieze depicts a number of major "lawgivers" who changed the course of human history and is done as a tribute to them. The Court refused to change the frieze because that would alter its artistic integrity and the Muslim community at that time accepted the decision since the work was not defamatory. Muslims know that Christians have no qualms about depicting the Jesus and the other prophets, even God himself (in the creation of Adam panel in on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel). While they do not agree with such images, they respect the rights of others to act according to their own beliefs, so long as there is no blatant racism or defamation.

Here's why we know there is no real free press question for the Danish paper *Jyllands-Posten*. The Editor, Fleming Rose is a protégé of star Muslim basher Daniel Pipes. In 2003, a freelance illustrator offered his paper a series of caricatures of Jesus. They were rejected because Rose's Sunday edition editor said that the newspaper's readers would not enjoy them and they would cause an outcry. In January (just after the publication of the Muhammad cartoons), the *International Herald Tribune* interviewed Rose. The IHT ask him if he would publish a caricature of Ariel Sharon strangling a Palestinian baby. Rose said that he would not because such an image would be "racist".

Rose set out to provoke Muslims and he has succeeded beyond his wildest dreams. Unfortunately, many politically naïve and easily manipulated Muslims have fallen into the trap and are providing Rose with exactly what he wanted—a demonstration that Muslims are violent and dangerous and that they receive political protection and support that others do not APPEAR to receive. That trap was sprung by radical islamists who also find it in their interest to provoke a clash between East and West.

The European newspapers are Johnny-come-latelys, who jumped into the fray when it was almost over; Rose had made a lukewarm pseudo-apology