

'Let's end This farce — now'

Few med students will have to read the article on the Dalhousie Gazette that appears elsewhere in this issue of Vox Medica to realize that our campus newspaper has become, believe it or not, even more nauseating than in past. What is especially irritating is that all of us are forced to support this rag to the tune of \$11,000 per year (or almost \$2 per Dal student) through compulsory student union fees. As if to rub it in, the paper is almost always delivered to the medical school days late, if it is delivered at all.

The predominant left-wing viewpoint of the Gazette is not the important matter at hand to us at the Vox, but the blatant incompetence and insensitivity of the Gazette staff is.

Any group that insists in leaving entire pages blank, that pads an already skimpy paper with full page poems week after week, that reprints pages of poorly written drivel from questionable news sources, to our mind is incompetent. Any college newspaper that reports only one sports event per issue is doing serious damage to the efforts of the many students who organize and play in other inter-faculty and inter-varsity sports. Any newspaper that refuses to at least report the vital interests of its publisher, the student union, is not only insensitive, but plain stupid.

Even if the student's representatives on the students council are too weak-kneed to do something about the matter, at least the students themselves have passed judgment in the most obvious way. Go anywhere on campus and you will find hundreds of the Gazette that go unread. To most, the Gazette is now a non-paper that is not even worth wrapping garbage in.

This situation is a pity because there

is so much of interest and importance going around this university. For instance, how many students realize that Dal will become one of the first universities in Canada to have its own ombudsman? How many students know what their representatives on senate and faculty committees are doing and saying? No, all the Gazette tells us is, "It is better to light one Molotov cocktail than curse the darkness" or that the food in the SUB is average or that the profit of Canada's seven largest banks are up 17 percent.

Let us end this farce — NOW.

But how? Consider the following methods:

- (1) Kill the paper outright?
- (2) Cut their budget and force them to sell their product.
- (3) Enforce strict guidelines on the staff as to content, viewpoint, size, etc.?
- (4) Amalgamate the Gazette and all other college papers in Halifax into one newspaper?
- (5) Recall the Gazette budget and set up a fund from which faculty-oriented newspapers and newsletters (such as the Vox) could draw upon?

No matter what is done it is obvious that the Student Council must take some action that brings them more into line with the attitudes of the vast majority of their constituents. We agree with the sentiments expressed by a committee formed two years ago to investigate the Gazette:

"As publisher and custodian of the Student Union finances, the Students Council has the final word in matters relating to the paper. That's what a publisher is! There is no contradiction whatsoever with the concept of editorial freedom. If those who pay for the paper are not getting what they want out of it, then their representatives are perfectly within their rights in taking whatever action is deemed necessary. Otherwise the paper becomes a parasitical elite existing on the enforced contributions of those who have no say in its policies of content."

(An editorial in Vox Medica, published by Dalhousie University medical students.)

Editorial

'Yes, let's'

In its last issue, the med school paper Vox Medica ran an editorial critical of the Gazette. It was reprinted by the Mail-Star and soon hit television and radio news as well as the radio open mouth shows. (See the editorial, this page, and story page 1).

The editorial is the latest broadside in what has, over the past few decades become an unending dissatisfaction with the Gazette; Vox Medica is the latest champion of the opposition cause.

We regret that we cannot respond with the same bellicose enthusiasm that motivated the editors of the Vox, but while they are the fresh troops, so to speak, we've been through all this before. What to them is a spirited attack is all part of the continuous ho-hum sort of ceremonial seige to us.

However, in keeping with the spirit of the season and our real obligation to the students and faculty here (yes, Vox Medica, there really is a Santa Claus — and we really do recognize the existence of obligation), some explanation is owing, not a reply to the Vox as much as a general statement of the problem as it affects us here.

The Gazette realizes better than any of the critics outside this office that we do not publish a paper acceptable to the majority of students at this university. We realize that we do not reflect their immediate interests. We also realize that our material does not measure up to the high critical standards of the professional writer or graphic artist. And we realize that we are not well received.

But for the pontificating editors of the Vox Medica to dismiss us as incompetent, insensitive and stupid is a bit of a simplification — besides, it's bad journalism. We indeed see the reality of our anomalous existence and, although it may come as a surprise, we do not particularly enjoy things as they now stand.

We do not pretend to be professionals in the usual sense of the word, and some of us never want to be cast in that questionable role. We are here only because somehow we want to be — some want to write, about anything, others have special things they want to

write about or express in poetry. We all make mistakes and learn as a result. Hopefully, both the learning and the mistakes appear in print, as they must if anything is to be gained (see page 12 for an example of what can happen when an interviewer doesn't check his final copy with the person interviewed.) The Gazette is a second-choice school of journalism as much as anything else. We make no pretense of unerring truth.

The overall viewpoint of the Gazette is certainly left of centre, or centre of right, which is another way of saying the same thing and is more to the point. Although the Vox claims this is of no importance to them, it is to most students, because when articles with a leftist perspective are included it means other things are not. We doubt that an article critical of the parasitism of the medical profession as evidenced by Medicare would be a satisfactory substitute, in Vox's eyes, for a story on a poor peoples' food co-op in North End Halifax. There is more to it than left vs. 'other' — the other can be more accurately defined.

Vox Medica and others suggest that financial and editorial restraints should be placed upon the Gazette, or that it should be scrapped entirely. The controls won't work. We've no reason at all to continue, doing things we don't want to do. We are not employees and won't operate under duress to keep our jobs. The result is a paper with no staff, functional twin of a staff without a paper, another Vox suggestion. There's no advantage to be gained for anyone with this approach.

A more constructive suggestion would be to scrap the staff, or rather its output, by transforming it. Infiltrate. Go one step further and find someone to run for editor against the Gazette staff choice, but make sure they know what they're getting into and are prepared to lose a lot of sleep. Be sure that they're willing to blow 5 or 10 courses during the course of a couple of academic years for the sake of the paper and their principles, journalistic and otherwise. Anyone can put out a paper by the seat of their pants, we've proved that much.

With no malice at all we suggest that you stop talking and do something a little more "true to your school" and opinions than the easy brand of hatchet job and bad-mouthing currently in vogue in the pages of Vox Medica.

To be called a stupid, insensitive, incompetent parasite is a drag. It misses the point, too.

Merry Christmas from all of us (there aren't many) to all of you. Even the likes of us can say that and mean it.

Neil Harrison, editor 1970
(soon to be replaced by the new improved 1971 model)

Note: This editorial is signed since it may not accurately reflect the views of the Gazette staff.