

## Black students

On the question of its dealings with the black students of Dalhousie, the DSU can only receive a resounding failing grade.

It is quite evident by specific actions and inactions that the DSU considers black students to be a negligible and irrelevant part of the student body.

Clearly the most poignant example of this position is the racist comment uttered by Executive Vice President Patti Dow last year. No apology was forthcoming. Such behavior is, of course, unacceptable and is sufficient basis to demand her resignation.

However this incident must not be viewed in isolation or as an anomaly. It is the manifestation of a conscious policy to systematically ignore the needs, concerns and problems of the black student body.

This attempt to relegate us to the realm of the invisible is a clear indication of the undemocratic functioning of the DSU. Never have black students been consulted in a constructive manner. The problem of racism and its impact on Blacks have been nonexistent on the DSU's list of issues. Yet the black student body through its various organizations and associations has continuously and vociferously articulated its deep concern over the growing problem of racism.

The refusal by the DSU to treat black students as a legitimate part of their constituency has far-reaching and profound ramifications.

Blacks have deep-seated concerns about the academic curriculum and how it relates specifically to Blacks. There are very few courses that deal with Blacks, their culture, history, and conditions. Those

courses that do exist frequently distort, misrepresent or outrightly falsify the realities.

Of course, none of us can forget how easily the past and present DSU administration accepted the closing of the African Studies Centre. Or the lack of a position opposing racism in all its forms, specifically in academic circles.

The experience of black students has exposed the lack of democracy in the DSU. Are we to remain a voice in the wilderness always ignored. Or worse yet accorded a mention only when a flippant condescending remark emanates from the "hallowed halls" of the DSU.

What is required is to create a truly democratic Student Union where every group has equal opportunity for input. This requires not only a commitment to the democratization of student politics, but an outright repudiation of the obvious policies of discrimination and "divide and rule" practised by the DSU. The institution of independent student politics is the only way the problems of all students can be solved. Mark: F

**Isaac Saney**  
Chair, ISA  
**Derek Paraig**  
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## Athletics

A commitment to an effective and efficient communication system has led to a harmonious and prosperous relationship between athletics at Dalhousie and the DSU. Both Ralph Cochrane and Patti Dow have made an concerted effort to make regular contact with the key players in the athletic community at Dalhousie and have been active participants in supporting the university at the varsity and intramural levels.

They have formed a base that will generate more student enthusiasm and get away from the apathetic attitude that seems to exist at Dalhousie athletic events. There are a number of top athletic teams at Dal and there is a difference in atmosphere at the games than there has been in the past.

Although there is not a great deal of formal interaction between the DSU and the athletic department, the most important relationship occurs on the Presidents Advisory Council on Athletics. The Council, predominantly made up of students, provides a positive forum for present program evaluations, new initiatives such as homecoming week or varsity week and for discussing changes to programs in place at Dalhousie presently.

The Director of Athletics, Tony Martin feels this Council is imperative to the success of athletics at Dal. "Because students make up the majority of the council, they make the decisions on the affairs of my department. This is very important because we are there to program for the students" said Martin.

Relationships with other athletic groups is equally as supportive. The Student Association of Health, Physical Education & Recreation (SAPHER) President Pamela Ross believes that the DSU is doing well and is very supportive of SAPHER and very co-operative in assisting in any of its activities.

Does this mean that because Dow, a former SAPHER president, is playing favorites? On the contrary states Martin. "I believe that in some instances Patti is so conscious of her former position in the athletic department that she makes things tougher for athletics so that she is not showing favoritism," said Martin.

However, in the last few years the main topic on the DSU/Athletic plate has been the optional athletic

fee imposed on students for Dalplex services. Martin explained that the fees are nessecary to compensate for the escalating costs associated with operating the Dalplex.

In the past two years the Dalplex fee has financed new floors for the squash and racquetball courts and a new basketball floor. Also it has provided better salaries for intramural officials, resulting in better quality officials and has given the intramural department better hours at Dal Arena for their arena programs. Instead of playing at 1:30 in the morning the majority of games are over before midnight.

While the benefits are obvious, the main issue is that students voted down, in a referendum, the Dalplex fee. The question is not whether students mind paying the fee. In fact, over 70% of the students at Dal this year have paid the fee which gives them access to Dalplex, free admission to varsity events and discounts on programs such as aerobics and swimming that the Dalplex offers.

The question is how can the administration overturn a decision made by students and approved through the President's Advisory Council and impose the fee.

The answer to this annual hot campaign question is unknown. Dow and Cochrane are beginning investigation into the question now which is late in regards to dealing with the issue this term. While the complete financial picture must be looked at it is important to address the seemingly lack of respect by the administration at Dal for the position that the DSU had on this issue in the past.

Many other universities have a mandatory athletic fee and while it appears that Dalhousie doesn't mind the nominal charge, they should mind the administration's methods of dealing with their student rights.

Overall, the DSU gets a B for their efforts in athletics. The Dalplex issue may not be specifically related to their administration but they better deal with the process behind the implementation of the fee before it slides to the back burner.

**Kevin Barrett**  
Masters of Leisure Studies student  
Representative of Raquetball N.S.

## Gays and Lesbians

My first contact with the present Student Union was during the 1990 general elections. The Cochrane/Dow slate made a strong impression on me, indeed the entire lesbian and gay community at Dalhousie. This impressions was shared by many other minority groups on campus and resulted from comments made during an election forum where our present Vice-President indicated that she saw nothing wrong with making a racist joke (as long as it was "only a joke"), in the interests of entertainment.

Such an attitude obviously indicates a complete lack of understanding around issues of discrimination, and an implicit mainstream ideology. As a result, many gays and lesbians quickly concluded that the DSU would not be very sensitive to the needs of minority groups on campus.

This was confirmed when the 1990-91 Student Union handbook failed to include GLAD in its list of DSU societies. I wrote to the Student Union President explaining why it was important to mention support groups for oppressed minorities in such a publication. Cochrane responded with an acknowledgement of GLAD's importance on campus and a thank-you for bringing this to his attention.

Since then, GLAD has been regularly receiving Student Union society mailouts, so I assume we are on the official list. Further, the External Vice-President contacted me personally to invite GLAD's participation in the National Week of Action. We also received a copy of the report of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual Constituency Group of the Canadian Federation of Students.

The DSU also complied with a request for a letter of support for an initiative asking Dalhousie to include 'same sex' couples in their spousal benefits program.

However, other experiences with Student Union services have been considerably more frustrating. Several meetings of GLAD in the first term were not posted at the Enquiry Desk. This caused great confusion and many members missed meetings as a result.

Interactions with the Campus Activities office proved equally discouraging. Last summer, a GLAD member approached Campus Activities with a lead on bringing Federal M.P. Svend Robinson to town, hoping GLAD and the DSU could sponsor him jointly. This proposal was initially accepted with enthusiasm by the Campus Activities representative, but it soon became apparent that the event was at the bottom of the priority list. As months passed, and no sign of activity or communication was forthcoming from the Campus Activities office, GLAD turned to the Gay and Lesbian Association of Nova Scotia to co-sponsor the event. An opportunity for GLAD to be affirmed as a legitimate and active society on campus was lost.

GLAD members do not have the freedom to participate openly in DSU activities because of the heterosexist/homophobic nature of society both on and off campus. Therefore, we choose not to participate in many Student Union activities, but rather set our own agenda. While the DSU has done well in keeping us informed of society activities, this is not one of GLAD's primary needs. GLAD needs to be recognized as a society filling a valid and necessary function. The group has taken on a variety of roles over the years. GLAD acts as an advocacy group, as an educator (annual Gay/Lesbian supplements in the Gazette and The Word is Out on CKDU-FM are accessible to all students), as a link to the larger community, as a social group, and as a haven from the discrimination that lesbians and gay men face on a daily basis.

Attempting to meet these needs has been rather frustrating. This, combined with the lack of confidence inspired by the election campaign, has resulted in GLAD being extremely cautious in its dealings with the Student Union. Overall I'd give them a 'D'.

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Board of Directors,  
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