

E-Z logic

Some staff members at the *Gazette* has been asking why we printed Jamie Glazov's sympathetic portrayal of the Sandinista government.

It was printed because the opinion and commentary sections of the paper are there for the opinion and comments of our readers. By making this space available for people who are not *Gazette* staff, we hope to present an open forum of ideas and opinions for the community, no matter how much the *Gazette* becomes an obscure group of far-left millenarian Satanistic cultists.

Judging by the replies from our readers in the letters section, it seems as if Jamie struck a responsive chord with his "enlightening" article.

Messrs Curry and Smith were certainly pleased that we "support intelligent writers such as Glazov who have the knowledge and excellent ability to write about such matters."

It is an excellent sign that the Dalhousie is inculcating its students in some of the latest and most employable methods of reasoning and logic. They'll certainly need it when they apply for jobs with External Affairs and the U.S. State department.

Some politicians call this new improved method of induction "strategic analysis". Philosophers used to refer to it as "sophistic reasoning". General Haig would have called it "disinformation".

Whatever you want to call it, it is obvious that Glazov is the true heir to Barbara Amiel in the art.

If Jamie ever wanted to give you a lesson in his logic it would go something like this:

Cite a widely accepted set of facts "if 'B', then 'A'". Show, using detailed but uncited "facts" that "not always if 'B' then 'A'". Conclude from this reasoning if 'B' then 'C' or 'J' or 'P' or 'Z' or 'Q' or whatever.

In this case, because one of the fathers of a member of the Sandinista government was associated with the Somoza regime Jamie concludes the Sandinista government is unfair, unjust and undemocratic.

It's real easy.

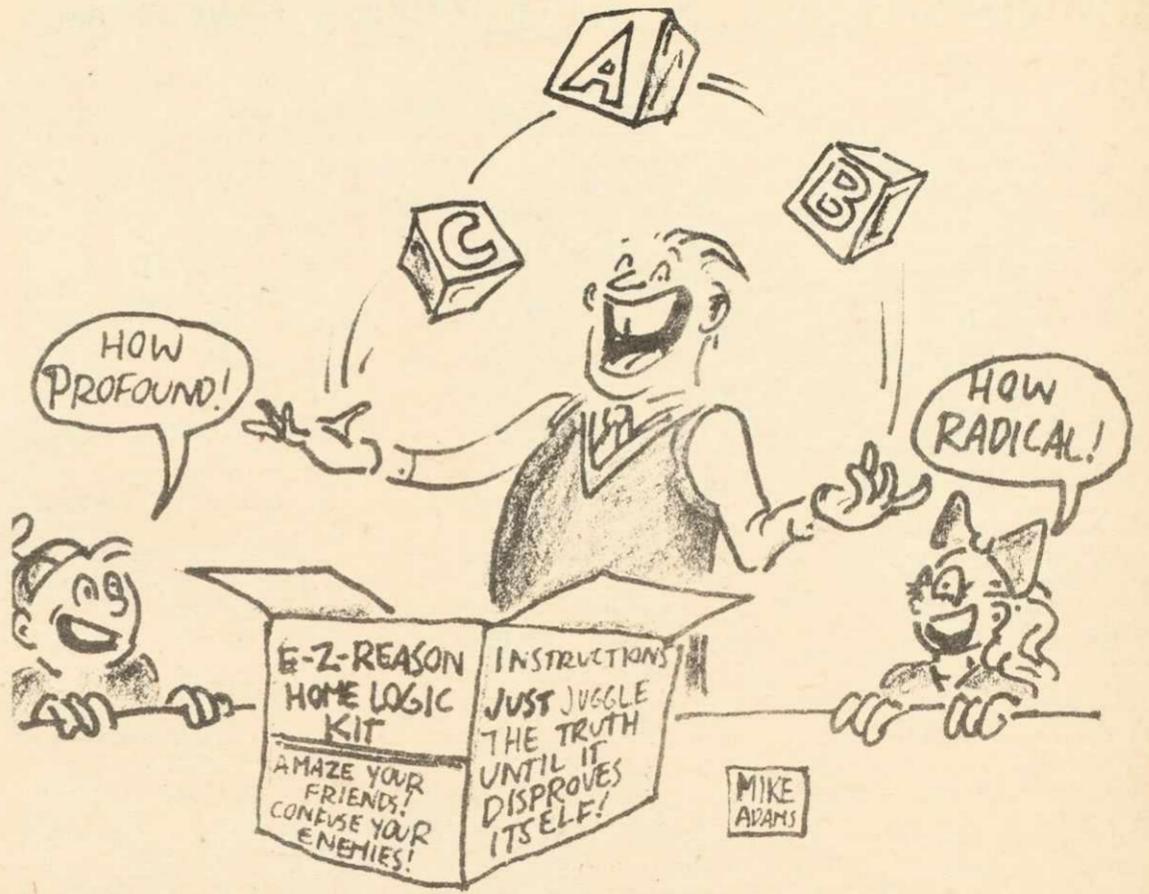
Look in any issue of MacLean's magazine for Barbara Amiel's column for an example.

The great thing about this elegant form of deduction is that it can be applied to anything: U.S. foreign policy, Soviet foreign policy, the feminist movement, peaceniks, the Middle East, affirmative action programs — you name it.

It's simple, it pretends to reveal the truth by inverting the complicated appearance of the real world (try it with your TV set if you get channel distortion). It also appeals to knee-jerk reactionaries who are looking for simple vindications of their beliefs from the confusing jumble of the real world and, most importantly, it is easily marketable.

It can be used if you lean to the left or to the right politically, but lately right wing philosophers have become the acknowledged experts at the art. And it doesn't take much thought.

- Toby Sanger



University of Informatons

This weekend's symposium marking the installation of Dr. Howard Clark as Dalhousie's ninth president will deal with the university's role in the transition to the "information economy".

The role of the new information technologies is so important in the future of universities and society that this symposium is an opportunity not to be missed by Dalhousie students.

Likewise, the independent role of universities in society is important enough that we hope some of its central aspects are not lost on the participants in the weekend's talks.

Little distinction is made between "information" and "knowledge" in the outline for the symposium. It may seem like subtle distinction but it is an important one.

The verbs "to inform" and "to know" have different meanings: informing is a process or activity while knowing is a state of mind. Information can be a type of knowledge but knowledge cannot be a type of information.

Information can be stored in computer databanks but knowl-

edge is an attribute of people's minds.

Knowledge comes from a slow and painful but rewarding process of understanding gained from experience and from discussions with other humans — one of the most important services the university community can provide.

Information, on the other hand, can be transmitted in a split second by fibre-optic cables.

By basing a university education on computers and information technology, much would be lost. What good is a university if it is reduced to a centre for the dissemination of information for students who are considered little more than consumers of information?

The increasing level of specialization of disciplines within universities and their greater dependence on quantifiable bytes of information are resulting in an erasing of the distinctions between information and knowledge and in the substitution of statistical analysis for logic.

Nowhere is this more evident than in the social sciences.

In a recent presentation to the annual meeting of the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada, the president of Northern Telecom called for increased government funding of post-secondary education in Canada.

"We must use excellence in education to help provide the opportunity for Canadians to win in a world economy where the competitive battle is being fought every day, on every front."

Before heeding the call to action of this industrialist, Dr. Clark would be wise to look up from the trenches of industrial warfare and consider the tale of Esau, who sold his birthright for a mess of pottage.

The real value of universities and knowledge transcends their economic value. Universities are not merely "economic units" within the "knowledge industries".

Instead, their primary role in a knowledge-based society should be to acknowledge the limitations and dangers of any one type of knowledge.

- Toby Sanger

Dear Readers...

We have received a number of letters to the editor which have not been typed but written in somewhat illegible script. Because we are fearful of misquoting any of our much-loved readers and do not have the time or inclination to retype letters, we require that all letters to the editor are typed, double-spaced, not longer than 300 words and submitted by Monday, noon, prior to publication.

Please include your name and

phone number. We reserve the right to edit letters to improve the grammar and not to publish letters if we consider them to defamatory (sexist, racist, homophobic) libelous or silly.

All the same, we (except for the typesetter) love to get letters on any topic. We might even withhold your name if you want, so long as you include your name and phone number on the letter so we can check authenticity.

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THE GAZETTE

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As founding member of Canadian University Press, the *Gazette* adheres to the CUP statement of principles and reserves the right to refuse any material submitted of a libelous sexist, racist or homophobic nature. Deadline for commentary, letters to the editor and announcements is noon on Monday. Submissions may be left at the SUB enquiry desk c/o the *Gazette*.

Commentary should not exceed 700 words, letters should not exceed 300 words. No unsigned material will be accepted, but anonymity may be granted on request.

Advertising copy deadline is noon, Monday before publication. The *Gazette* offices are located on the 3rd floor SUB. Come up and have a coffee and tell us what's going on.

The views expressed in the *Gazette* are not necessarily those of the Student Union, the editor or the collective staff.

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