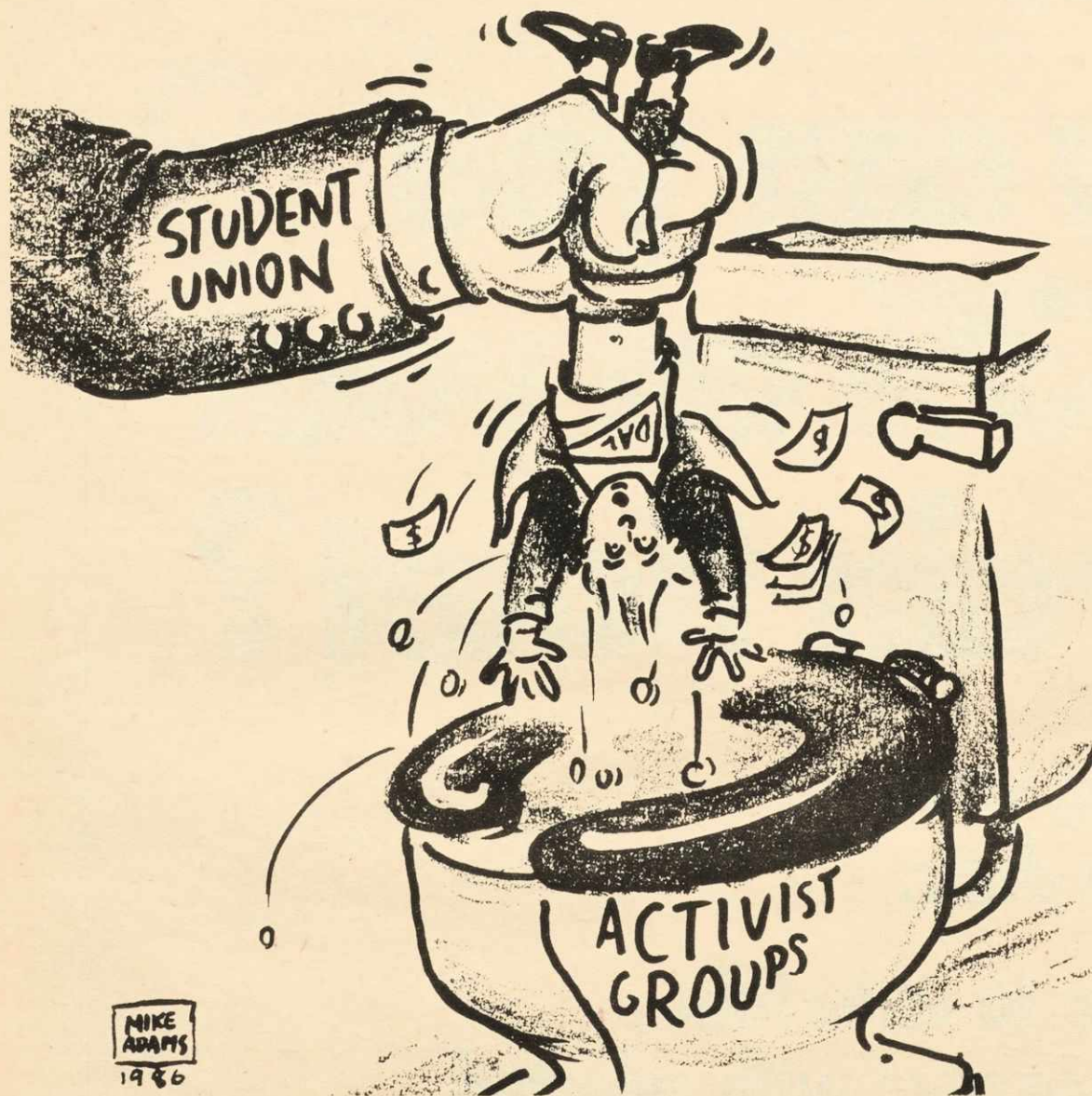


# Collective versus individual rights



Dear Sirs and Mesdames and Ms's,

In your article on Crosbie's anti-porn legislation (Sept 18) you claim that in June and July there were "major new attacks launched on individual freedoms in both Canada and the United States". You forgot the decision of the Ontario Supreme Court, handed down in July by Justice John White, in which Justice White ruled that compulsory union dues cannot be used for political purposes, for the simple reason that in a free and democratic society people should not be forced to pay for political causes they disagree with. This decision was a major DEFENSE for individual freedoms. It defends individuals against unions more interested in "collective" rights than individual rights. The court challenge was financially backed by the National Citizens' Coalition, which the Left likes to call "conservative" or "right wing", but whose motto is, aptly, "more freedom through less government."

In a few weeks or months I predict that this ruling will have important implications for students interested in protecting their own freedoms from encroachment by their student union. That is, if the experiences of McMaster and UBC can serve as guides. In your article on Nader (Sept. 18, you spelled his name wrong), you describe how he has urged the establishment of a levy on student union dues for the funding of a Public Interest Research Group. This will come about by means of a referendum.

What will happen is this.

The student union will subsidize the campaign in favour of the levy. Those who oppose it will have no financial backing. Most students, not understanding the issue, will either not vote, or, influenced by "YES" slogans plastered all around campus, will vote "yes". There will be a few hand-written "NO" signs which will promptly be ripped off. When the PIRG people win their campaign, students will see their union dues jacked up next year. They will find themselves obliged to fund an activist group on which they will have little or no representation and over which they will exert little or no control. None of the standard checks on research, for example peer review, will apply.

What fair-minded students should do is the following:

1. Ensure that the levy operates on an "opting-in" formula. In other words, when you pay your student union dues, you can opt-in to the PIRG and donate the money. This will ensure more responsiveness from the PIRG in dealing with student issues, and not issues of their own making. If they do a bad job, students can stop funding them.

2. Ensure that if the student union funds one side of the campaign, it funds the other. And that the "NO" side is given as much time to organize a campaign as the "YES" side.

Yours Sincerely,

Phil Green, Department of Mathematics, Statistics and Computing Science.

## No room in the student union for politics

THERE'S NO ROOM IN THE Dalhousie student union for politics.

There is space at DSU Meetings to discuss budgets, committees, fundraising and more meetings, but when political issues are brought to the attention of our student politicians, the discussion either ends abruptly or is ignored altogether.

The DSU has a long tradition of activism. When its original participants decided to form a union, they had to fight for the right to exist as an independent student organization, free from interference from the university's administration. The legacy of that struggle, however, has not been traditional activism, but a

bureaucracy concerned more with its own internal operations than with political issues.

The Coalition of Apartheid in Halifax has long tried to involve the DSU in its organization, but to date has been unsuccessful in receiving regular representation from the DSU at its meetings. And closer to home, on the campus itself, the Dalhousie Staff Association, despite regular contact, has been unable to secure a commitment from the student union for its long battle with the administration over Ritchie and Associates.

The DSU has long paid lip service to the issue of apartheid, regularly claiming it wants the Board of Governors to completely divest its holdings in companies

that do business with the South African government or have holdings in that country. Some of its members in the past have been active on the BOG divestment committee. But now the student politicians are not questioning the university's divestment procedures, and have not insisted, to date, that Dalhousie be responsible to students for its investment practices. They seem eager to accept at face value the form of truth the BOG offers — that it has completely divested.

The DSA has coordinated a powerful and highly publicized campaign against Ritchie and Associates, the time management team the university administered to follow its staff around with stopwatches. Students were

informed of the staff's opposition to Ritchie when they went through registration, meeting workers with "Ritchie Busters" buttons and being told that the help they received from staff members was "extra" and not considered work by the Ritchie surveyors.

But the DSU has yet to tell the administration what students think about Ritchie and Associates. They have not thrown their support behind the staff association, and no support seems too much like acceptance of the administration's right to interfere with staff life and acceptance of harassment at its worst.

Taking a stand on these issues and others would not jeopardize the DSU's right to exist. Rather, it

would acknowledge student concern with human rights violations and help inform students on campus about these issues.

Our student politicians have a responsibility to students that goes beyond organizing super SUBs and the internal workings of its own organization. They have the mandate to represent students at all levels of political discussion, whether it be human rights violations or investment procedures of the university.

People in the university community are willing to help the DSU form an educated opinion on a variety of issues. And students at Dalhousie are more than ready for their representatives to take a stand.

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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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