

LETTERS

Gazette Graded

To the editors:

Since the Dalhousie *Gazette* so valiantly took it upon themselves to grade the Dalhousie Student Union's performance, I thought it appropriate that I subject the *Gazette* itself to similar scrutiny. I read all university newspapers regularly (though at times I feel quite alone in that regard) and, upon careful consideration, have given the *Gazette* the following grades:

News coverage, A. The *Gazette's* strong suit — always a diverse collection of news items from Dalhousie and elsewhere (through Canadian University Press). Sometimes I think the *Gazette* is a little too newsy, which seems a strange thing to say about a newspaper, but it can get boring. Stories about cafeteria price increases can only interest for so long.

Sports coverage, C. Decent coverage of Dalhousie teams, which I guess is alright, but straightforward to the point of tedium. Lack of editorial punch or outside sports coverage makes for tiresome reading. Even the articles about Dalhousie sports are formulaic — how about some dramatics instead of blandly listing goal scorers?



Editorials, B+. They always have something to say, but what they have to say is a bit predictable — until Alex Mason's condemnation of the Persian Gulf teach-in at Dalhousie, I felt I'd read every editorial somewhere before. But the writing is crisp and to the point, and sometimes deliciously cutting (the DSU report card was particularly good). And thank God *Gazette* readers have been spared thus far the agony of a "Student Apathy" editorial.

Letters to the Editor, A. Arguably the best part of reading the *Gazette*. Though sometimes things can get out of hand — for example, last year's laughable "Homme legitime" debate — the letters printed consistently provide better editorializing than the editorials.

Humour, F. Surely the most glaring weakness of the *Gazette*. There are no cartoons, no humorous articles, no satirical editorials. And it shows badly. Of course humour has its limitations — witness the pathetic "Joe and Andy's Excellent Advice" of my own university's newspaper, a sad spectacle of forced humour gone wrong — but it is necessary. Lighten up, *Gazette*!

Proofreading, B. Too many typos in too many places, but still leagues ahead of the *Journal* and *Picaro* in that regard.

Overall, I give the Dalhousie *Gazette* a B. It probably deserves better, but the lack of humour really hurts. News and anti-tuition hike editorials are fine, but in the final analysis the *Gazette* needs a few laughs to complement them.

Colin Boyd
Saint Mary's University

Ben Again...

To the editor:

I am writing in response to Angel Figueroa's article on the return of Ben Johnson. Near the end of the article, it is stated that Johnson "used drugs to beat those who were clean..."

Considering the fact that Figueroa is not only a writer, but one of the sports editors, one would expect a little more objectivity in his opinions. He makes it sound as if Ben Johnson was the only athlete to ever take drugs in an attempt to surpass all competition. This, however, is completely untrue. The fact is that the majority of the Canadian team was using steroids and Johnson just happened to be caught and an example was made of his actions. And even if only the Canadian team was using steroids, wouldn't it then be far superior in all track and field competition? Considering the probability that most, if not all, other countries are also guilty of the same crime, stating that Johnson should "never be allowed to compete again" is utterly ridiculous. Does Figueroa also believe that athletes such as Bob Probert and Grant Fuhr should never be allowed to play again? Get real! They have made their mistakes, have paid (or are paying) for them, and have hopefully each learned their lesson. Now let them get on with their lives and their careers.

S. Townley



Despair

To the editor:

This school has let me down yet again. They wanted me to fork over another \$419 before I was to graduate in April. I'll tell you how.

At the beginning of the year I needed 3.5 credits to graduate and was thinking of applying to the honours program. So, under advisement, I registered myself for 5 credits. The extra credits, I was told, would please the ruling

committee in question. An unfortunately low mark disqualified me from any honours pursuit, so after dropping 3 B-term classes I was back to my simple B.Sc.

The problem started when I tried to pay my second term installment. Since I was registered as a full-time student in September, I had paid the typical \$1195 (plus Dalplex) first installment. Now, since I dropped 3 B-term classes, which left me taking two classes I was a part-time student, right? WRONG. I'm still being called a full-time student and therefore I owe them the full-time second installment of \$753!

Let me explain why this ticked me off, if it isn't obvious. If I were only taking one B-term class I would only owe them 134 bucks. Those of you who have studied the Fees page of your calendar know that a half-credit course costs \$200 even. If the math majors help us do some quick calculations we find that I'll be paying \$619 for that extra half-credit so I can graduate. That's over three times the regular price!

"Yeah, but there must be some way around it," you say? Well, there is. If I take only one class this term and another class some other year, I can avoid paying \$619 bucks for my final class.

To those who may call me a cheapskate, I say the hell with you! I'm not made of money! It may be just that it's happening to me but I don't think this is right. Somebody else may want me to quit complaining. But the way I see it, \$400 buys a lot of cheeseburgers. With a \$6/hour part-time job, that's more than three weeks wages.

Lastly, I'd like to acknowledge that the employees in the Student Accounts office were just doing their jobs. Which I might add, knowing Dal, are probably underpaid. I don't know how much they make but why would they be striking if they were rich? No, the real villain is high up, and I'd like to express my deep discontent with him or her. Maybe we should put a name and a face on this person so it'll be harder for them next year. Who do they think we are anyway?

Let's not blame student president Ralph Cochrane for it. I'm sure Ralph did everything he could think of to stop it, even reduce it. Let's blame the people who are really responsible. I'd like the *Gazette* to give us the name or names of the people that are responsible with their office addresses and phone numbers printed below this letter should they decide to print it, so that people besides myself who may be fed up can personally express their discontent.

I'm leaving this letter unsigned because I don't know what kind of a kingpin this tuition guy is. Seeing the damage they can do to this institution as a whole I can just imagine what they could accomplish if they focused that destruction onto one student!

Darkman

Typesetter's note:

Last year I was also in the position of needing 3.5 credits to finish my degree. I ended up taking the final half-credit in the summer session because I didn't feel inclined to make a "gift" of \$419 to the university. You may be interested to know that several years ago, when the Dalhousie Board of Governors proposed that students taking over three credits in an academic year be charged full tuition, the Student Union approved the policy. Evidently, tuition for students taking a full 5 credits is cheaper when students taking between 3 and 5 credits are forced to pay full fees. So maybe you should head to the DSU office to voice your disapproval.

DSU?

To the editor:

After reading the last issue of the *Gazette* (Jan. 31), I was surprised to see that the DSU, true to form, was absent from these pages.

One would think that after receiving such a poor report from 'the student body as a whole', that the DSU hierarchy would have had some response. Either they just accept that all said about them was true, or they are just too indifferent to care!

If all that was written is true, then the very least they could do would be to apologize to the student body publicly through the *Gazette*. They could openly admit their mistakes and try to make things right by getting some input from the student body.

But, as we have seen from the past, the DSU is bad at apologizing or admitting error.

I think that all conscientious members of the student body should attend all the forums put on by the new people seeking to be a part of the DSU next year. The present DSU has given us POOR leadership, let's make sure this does not happen again!

John Burchall
President, ISA



Unfounded Assumption

To the editors:

The headline "The Mainstream Media is Censored... The *Gazette* is Not" which appeared on the cover of your Peace Supplement is the result of an unfounded assumption. The rest of the cover was just plain sensationalistic.

Darkman

The assumption: that campus newspapers are not mainstream, but instead constitute part of the alternative media (like *This Magazine*, the *Utne Reader* or the *Village Voice*.) Nothing could be further from the truth. Aside from the fact that many professional journalists were at one point campus writers and editors (what's the name of the *Gazette* editor of a few years ago who writes for the *Chronicle Herald* now?), college papers serve the community. The stories and advertisements are of primary interest to the people of that community. What's so alternative about this? Who strolls onto campus looking to pick up a copy of the *Gazette* to get alternative coverage of the stories they read in the *Globe and Mail* that day?

The sensationalism: you quote the *New York Times* and *Harper's* in your peace supplement. Can there be a newspaper that represents genteel (read: mainstream, and mainstream American at that) wisdom more than the *Times*? The editor of *Harper's* is rich and Cambridge-educated. If you are going to decry the mainstream (icky and "censored") media then put your money where your mouth is and write something different: just don't quote journals of polite opinion while posturing as an alternative. When you think the mainstream is good enough to quote in your supplement, but call it censored in huge letters on your cover, well, let's just say that Fleet Street tabloid barons would be proud. While you are not selling newspapers in the same sense they are, your front page fulfills the same purpose as theirs. I hope you never complain about page three girls: after all, catchy covers are what it's all about.



Peace supplements are a good idea, but they should be done right. Your hypocritical treatment of a serious issue, the role of the media in wartime, can only lead me to question your commitment to sound journalism: alternative, mainstream or any other kind. Finally, papers that run "we reserve the right to refuse to print any material of a sexist, racist or homophobic... nature" should shut the fuck up when talking about censorship.

Andy Lamey
The Watch

