

COMMENTARY

DAGS Dagger rests in peace after "brief blaze"

by Paul S. Burdett, Jr.

Obituaries are not my habitual genre, yet, given my association with the publication in question, something of the sort seems in order.

Dagger was spawned with all the unfounded enthusiasm which only the self-delusive exuberance of the moment can husband. It's fate was not to be that of all DAGS' other projects (save the Grad House; and even that is dubious given the stultifying 'in crowd' atmosphere). No, the **Dagger** was not to blaze gloriously then sputter and die like an untended fire. Nay, this was going to be something different, we were committed, it would survive and flourish. Graduate students were finally to have the permanent outlet they, via the 'good offices' of their councillors, seemed to desire.

'Oh, what fools these mortals be!' **Dagger** has not proven a unique case at all and

it may now assume its (deserved?) place next to all of DAGS' other 'good intentions'; helping to 'pave the road', so to speak. The blaze was brief indeed.

Dagger's apparent demise is tragic, but perhaps foredoomed. For a short time it really seemed that we had reversed the normal DAGS pattern of blossom and wither: students eagerly awaited the next issue; even professors read our humble copy and asked after forthcoming numbers. But, alas, 'quothe the Raven. . . .' For a time it appeared as if Dalhousie's lethargic graduate students were finally evolving into a vital organism of sorts: something with life and initiative instead of the habitual miasma. A healthy **Gazette-Dagger** rivalry was abrew. Judging from the reactions I received, the student society (in the sociological sense; we are nothing at all akin to a

'community') seemed to enjoy the debate between Mr. Walton and myself and it appeared as if my colleagues and I had finally managed to rouse our respective peers from their collective intellectual stupor. Alas, they (and especially DAGS) appear to prefer the unconscious state. My apologies to Mr. Walton that such a promising joust was terminated after one brief bout.

The real tragedy, though, is not merely the death of one minor periodical (after all, consider the entire Canadian publishing industry), but rather the reality which that event reflects: DAGS is a victim of student lethargy; the Council is likewise afflicted (one of the reasons for my resignation therefrom); and **Dagger** was a casualty of same. For example, consider the Council: it is not rather curious that there are now more APPOINTED DAGS councillors than elected? To

be sure, the conundrum is rationalized by Council's constitutional loophole of declaring such persons (in this case, I adjure the use of 'representatives') 'elected'. Nevertheless, no one cares. DAGS cannot even obtain enough nominations to fill—via acclamation—existing vacancies let alone conduct anything which might dignify the word 'election'. DAGS is run by a small clique of souls, well-intentioned to be sure, who spend graduate fees (most business conducted re parties), set policy and implement decisions (when one can be reached) which may be at odds with the heretofore submerged wishes of their 'constituents' (inverted commas because there are several sound theoretical reasons for doubting that word's application in the prevailing circumstances).

Let me hasten to add, however, so that this does not

seem a singular condemnation of the Council, that Council meetings were always open to the public, a fact which has been publicized, and that there is a DAGS bulletin board in the Grad House where minutes are posted for any who care to read Mr. Grieve's scientillating prose. In short, to reassert an observation (not 'new' by any means) voiced by my comrade-in-pens Mr. Walton: people get the government (more specifically, the dearth thereof; and that is not necessarily bad in itself) they deserve. In more graphic terms: quitcher-bitchin, you've done it to yourselves.

Much of what appears in the **Gazette** is politically naive and intellectually juvenile (not to say trite), yet you chaps (Need I add 'chappettes'?) are at least still in business. That is a lot more than can be said for others (N.B. I did NOT say your 'superiors').

Keep your brain tuned to the constitution

by Thomas Vradenburg

If you're tired of hearing about the Constitution, sick of the deluge of press coverage, and nauseated by the cynicism of all involved, please stay tuned anyway.

The Constitution is the most important news to come out of Ottawa since the same man

invoked the War Measures Act in 1970. It's obviously fundamental structurally to whatever is to follow.

It's more important than oil pricing agreements or who controls the Hibernia fields off Newfoundland. It's bigger than civil rights or minority language rights, or the Crows-

nest Pass Freight Rates.

Some have said the Constitution debate is the battle between two different visions of Canada. The Prime Minister wags his finger and talks about a unified federal state, while Joe Clark wags his finger and talks about the diversity of Canada and provincial rights. I'm amazed the debate has been reduced to these two poles; certainly the NDP's choice to side with the Liberals was pivotal. Obviously, the eternal question is whether either side truly represents anyone's opinion but its own.

It's also a battle that will determine the shape of future federal-provincial relations, and so indirectly who controls Hibernia and what oil will cost. Anglo-Canadian relations are at stake. One Pierre Trudeau, majority in hand, is very interested in how history will treat him.

Most important though, is the growing power of the federal government, especially the Cabinet. Control of a possible constitution referendum is only the latest chapter in a long saga. The Tories complain, as was debated before the Quebec referendum last year, that the government can and will stack the deck when it comes to drawing up the question(s).

A second long glance at most any piece of Liberal legislation of the past decade reveals the power of the federal government creeping, both extensively and intensively, into our lives:

Bill C-43, the Trudeau government's freedom of information bill, is an example. Buried in Section 73 of the second part of the Bill is the key to its real meaning. Section 73 reads: "The Cabinet shall make regulations

regarding the following areas"



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"Aha!" I said to myself, reading the Bill late one night. Somehow I knew, buried in there somewhere was the proof the government was hoping to write itself another **carte blanche**. What sort of powers Section 73 would afford the government is naturally subject to judicial interpretation.

But the trend is irreversible, and there seems little anyone, even the Tories, can do against a Parliamentary majority.

Political scientist Claus Mueller offers a bigger pic-

ture. It is characteristic of advanced industrial societies that government, and not entirely through "creeping socialism" should expand its power to degrees not seen since Feudal Europe, he says.

His book **The Politics of Communication** uses the Nixon regime as a case. I feel doubts about what we're being told in the press, but I can't blame it on the journalists.

Mr. Mueller says: "Political interpretations are influenced by the withdrawal of informa-

tion and the dissemination of rationalizations which are not meant to become apparent to the public." When journalists fail to make these rationalizations seem clear to us, it's not really their fault.

Mueller states theoretically that every political journalist knows about the Constitution.

"One of the functions of constrained communication is that office holders retain control over the management of public issues."

And every journalist knows that the Liberal government exercises incredible power over all the levers, including information. This power cannot be stressed enough.

The Liberals have the majority, and plan to do with it as they bloody please. And the rest of us will have to tag along for the ride. Yes campers, it's just that simple.

Anyway, I shan't bore you with this any longer.

CFS wins!

OTTAWA (CUP)—Students at Saint Mary's and Carleton Universities have become the founding members of the Canadian Federation of Students (CFS).

Referenda were held at both the campuses the week of February 16-20, asking students to approve membership in the newly formed student organization. CFS is a product of the merger of the National Union of Students (NUS), the Association of Student Councils (AOSC)—the service wing of NUS, and the various provincial student bodies.

Carleton students voted 74 per cent in favour of the umbrella organization, with about 20 per cent of the population turning out to the polls.

At Saint Mary's, 16 per cent of the students voted 80 per cent in favour of CFS.

Don Perry, NUS Atlantic fieldworker, said students at SMU saw the need for CFS, in view of increasing cutbacks in

federal funding of education.

"They see that CFS can be an effective lobby to the government," said Perry.

NUS executive officer John Doherty was pleased with what he called a "clear mandate" from Carleton students.

"This is a good sign," said Doherty. "Carleton is a key campus and will give the organization financial support."

Perry and Doherty agree that the wins at Saint Mary's and Carleton will lead the way for victories at other campuses.

"Now that Saint Mary's has been successful, other institutions in the Atlantic will get the ball rolling," said Perry.

The next CFS referendum is scheduled for Okanagan College's Kelowna campus next week. Votes are also coming up in March at Selkirk, Capilano and Wascana Colleges and the University of Manitoba.