

Democracy or tyranny of the white majority

We are slowly coming to the realization that not all is well with the state of this society. 'We' doesn't refer to all of us, the grand We. Many of you know you have been getting the shaft for years.

In this case, 'we' refers to those who run society and for whom society is run. That is rich white males.

The system of politics we have is called 'democracy.' Apparently, because everyone gets a vote, everyone gets to say what goes on. What a load of crap. Sure, everyone gets a vote, but the oligarchy, the ruling aristocracy make the rules to serve themselves.

Is there any argument to this? Can anyone argue that rich white men run this city/province/country. The system is set up to serve its own, and those who are not of the ruling caste get screwed. What a revelation! Women, blacks, Indians and the handicapped have all known this for centuries. I have known this for a while now, and every so often, the knowledge leaps again to the front of my brain and fouls my vision.

What caused the leap of clarity this time is a document called "Breaking the Barriers: Report on the Task Force on Access for Black and Native People." One of the phrases used in the piece is 'systemic racism.'

I first heard the term 'systemic racism' in North Preston, at a

press conference held by the parents of the kids arrested at Cole Harbour High School. I didn't really understand it then, but I think I do now.

There is no Ku Klux Klan in Nova Scotia, just as there is no formal group that says "women must be kept second class citizens." There is no formal group that says, "let's make life difficult for those folks in wheelchairs." These formal groups are not necessary, because the barriers that keep people out and down are integrated subtly in our laws. These barriers are part of our system.

This is what systemic racism is:

the school system that streams people from minority groups into 'general' rather than 'academic' courses of study. Systemic sexism bred the 'pink collar ghetto.' Systemic oppression is the lack of a ramp running straight up the front steps of the Arts and Administration Building.

So what? I am not a racist. I believe I could walk into the cafe at the SUB, and ask the first white male I met if he was a racist and he would say no. But we are the people who benefit from this elitist society. He and I are the winners in the game of systemic oppression, because we are white and men and able-bodied.

This is really painful, because what I am writing is absolutely no surprise to a huge portion of the population. In "Breaking the Barriers," many of the Blacks and Micmacs surveyed said "Yeah, another study. Here's the problem. We'll explain it to you again. We'll explain it to you again, for the Xth time. Now, what are you going to do about it?"

What are we going to do about it? The task force that wrote the document asserts that the only way to provide fair access to the people that have been previously denied fair access is to confront the problem "in an active and constructive way." They challenge the university to prove the

skeptics wrong. There have been other studies done on access, which resulted in no action. There has to be real effort, not just lip service.

"Breaking the Barriers" challenges the university to live up to its commitment to fair access for blacks and natives. In the same way, anyone who claims to be anti-racist or anti-sexist or anything like that had better be prepared to prove it. It is not enough to claim to want equality, for one is not innocent until proven guilty in this situation. Like Tony Bird, a white African, says "If you're not part of the solution, you're part of the machine."

Sandy MacKay

How Frank is Clark on the president's residence?



The September 12 issue of *Frank* magazine brought up the issue of Dalhousie President and Vice-Chancellor Howard Clark's renovations to his official house in 1986. This was in addition to the \$400,000 spent in 1983 by the previous president. The \$109,000 for these renovations to his Oxford St. address came from University funds and from the taxpayers' pockets. This issue seems to pop up at least once a year as a new batch of students becomes familiar with the Dalhousie campus. The article also mentioned his laboratory in the chemistry building that Clark is seldom seen in and few students see.

Talking to students old and new, it was possible to get the reactions of those who should be concerned as tuition fee payers. When asked if they were familiar with Clark, they gave surprising answers. Many were unfamiliar with Clark, his position and titles at the university, and his lab. However, some had brief recollections of the aging issue of the renovations to Clark's house and had mixed feelings about it.

Some were upset, calling it a blatant misuse of university funds. They insisted the money

should have gone to help keep classes that were being cut. This is a result of the budget cutbacks Clark called for at the same time as he petitioned the board of governors for the renovation money. Other students said the money was being used wisely, and that the President's house must reflect the quality of the university. The latter group of students were echoing what Dr. Clark had said in all interviews since the renovations.

Clark used the term "major resource" in describing his residence. His house is an important part of fundraising activities, especially with alumni functions. In an interview last Tuesday, Clark said his house was very important for keeping in touch with Dalhousie alumni. He also said this upkeep of the president's house is the same at Harvard or Stanford. If students were unfamiliar with him or his house, it was due to their own unsocial behaviour and not his. He was quick to point out that six hundred students were at his house for breakfast at the start of the year before Shinerama. He also said, "if students have any problems my door is open." He said he tries to attend many functions and holds many more at his

house.

Much of this problem should be put aside. This issue has been coming up over and over. Even with the repetition of the issue in the local newspapers, most students have only dim memories of it. The questions asked the president have been asked many times before by many reporters. Although he had no problems answering the questions, he wondered aloud if this issue would continue to arise annually for the next one hundred years.

Even three years later, Clark claims all the functions held at his house and the research done at his lab have helped the university immensely in one way or another.

At the bottom line, it is the individual who must decide whether the money was used well or not. It is important to let the issue fall aside like that of the Prime Minister's last pay raise. The public has a right to know, but the issue has been beaten and more pressing issues must be attended to during this year, both on the campus and in the city. It is up to the board of governors to decide how much a good president and a good university cost.

Paul Beasy

Apology

We would like to extend an apology to Dave Middleton. He was the photographer of the photo that appeared, in an altered form, on the cover of Vol. 22, No. 3. We neglected to include his name. The photo was part of Middleton's "Boyhood Exhibit."



THE ENVIRONMENT NEEDS YOU!
EXPRESS YOUR VIEWS IN THE UPCOMING GAZETTE ENVIRONMENTAL SUPPLEMENT!!
CONTACT MUNJU AT 425-5080 OR LEAVE MESSAGE AT GAZETTE OFFICE.



March for VIA Rail

Attention fellow student travellers. We are faced with the threat of losing our train! Proposed legislation calls for the shut-down of Via Rail services in Atlantic Canada!

Can we let the Conservative Mulroney government believe Atlantic Canadians are too lazy

and apathetic to motivate ourselves towards saving our invaluable train service? Should we allow the Canadian government to assume no one uses the train?

I do not think so. If you agree, get involved. A protest march is being planned which will include students of Dal, SMU,

King's, NSCAD, and the Mount. Stay tuned for further information.

Voice your support at the student union information desk or call. Thank you for your concern.

Kristin Grimson
Robin Oakley
Roxanne Deevey