

COMMENTARY

It was a bad day for participatory democracy

by Glenn Walton

A funny thing happened last Thursday evening in the Student Union Building, as returns from the Dalhousie Student Council elections began trickling in. The Logan Brothers, who had entertained the campus with the unlikeliest campaign in some time, began respecting the democratic process. As it became apparent that they had a shot at the top executive positions, a seriousness about student issues crept into their previously irreverent statements. As we all now know, the joke candidates had the last laugh, eventually winning what turned out to be a squeaker, by 44 votes over the Graham-Gilkinson team. Any doubts about their not serving were soon dispelled, and a post-election day interview with

CBC reporters was uncharacteristically pious. Words about how they had sensed a mood on campus and were the candidates of protest were flashed across Canada, and must have satisfied sociologists in, say, Whitehorse, or at Maclean's magazine. Those of us who were seriously interested in the campaign and in the issues discussed during it, and have put more effort into political and social change than a cursory poster campaign, can only respond: feathers and dung!

The Logans owe their narrow victory not to cynicism, but to complacency. The former term implies a certain and oftentimes healthy amount of thinking, something I doubt most of the people who marked their ballots for the Logans

did much. Why should they have, when the candidates themselves ignored the many forums and question-and-answer sessions held around campus, even when (as on at least one occasion) they were physically present? Ultimately, in an election that was narrowly contested, it was bloc voting — always of questionable merit — that decided the margin. The law school chose to vote overwhelmingly for their favorite sons, and said in effect "to hell with the rest of the campus". A supreme irony, that the system was made laughable by those who are destined to profit the most from the making and interpreting of laws.

The results perhaps would have made more sense if there had been no choice between the serious candidates. The Graham-Gilkinson team in par-

ticular was directed specifically to those who feel that the bureaucrats of the SUB have lost sight of the concerns of the 'outside world'. Their campaign included not only concern for the legitimate interests of other students but for national and even international issues (Remember the Good Old Days of campus fervour?) Instead we saw win a pack of promises (like a proposal to move the campus) that made good copy for the entertainment media, but which offered no solutions to the very real problems facing students today. To do them credit, the Logans themselves were apparently as surprised as anyone at their election; indeed it is perhaps relevant to ask whether many of those who voted for them would have done so if they had any expectation of them winning.

A bad day it was for participatory democracy, but the results must be honoured, and the democratic process will now absorb its former delinquents. The Logans, unacquainted with the workings of student government, must now undergo the arduous task of preparing for jobs that were awarded them by a process they mocked. It will be interesting, in a year's time, to see how they have fared. It is an ultimate irony of their non-campaign that the onus is now on them to do the job much better than the present officeholders (or anyone else who ran might have, for that matter). By not condescending to let the students who will now pay their salaries question them on the issues, it is now up to them to defuse the very real cynicism that their victory has generated.

Dal Student Union

now accepting applications for the following positions:

- 1) Director of Photo
- 2) Pharos Editor
- 3) Station Manager CKDU

Applications are now available at Council Offices, Rm 222, SUB and must be submitted by 5:00 p.m., Monday, March 23.

DAL STUDENT UNION

now accepting nominations for
HONOUR AWARDS
for Graduates of Class of 81

nomination forms available at
Student Council Offices Rm 222
and must be submitted by
Monday, March 23 5:00 p.m.

Dal Student Union
now accepting applications for
Community Affairs Secretary
1981-82

Applications may be picked up at Council Offices Rm 222 SUB and must be submitted by 5:00 p.m. Wednesday March 18

Fear and Loathing on the Reagan demo trail

By Thomas Vradenburg

It sounds cliché, but there really was electricity, maybe magic in the air that day. Only the Son of God would get better official treatment.

I hopped on the bus, headed for the Hill. The driver, who normally wheels down Wellington St., in front of the Hallowed Halls, tells me he's been detoured a block South.

Wellington St. was lined with maple leaves and stars and stripes from the Chateau Laurier to the Supreme Court. That, and about a hundred Ottawa Police and RCMP, made one cower just a bit.

But as I walked through the gates, past the Centennial flame, onto the grass where students dressed as soldiers change the guard for the tourists, the atmosphere changed.

Onlookers had lined the route along Wellington St. to Sussex Dr., but the folks on the Hill were a different breed. Some voice preached about human rights in El Salvador through a P.A. system. These were leftists, by gosh!

Well, not quite. The demon-

stration was run by the Ottawa-El Salvador Solidarity Committee, whoever they are. But local universities provided most of the bodies. People were also bused in from McGill, Queen's and Toronto. There seemed something a bit wierd about kids in Harvard glasses and pullover windbreakers yelling "Viva El Salvador," but there they were.

To be fair, there were a few honest-go-God socialists about, carrying their share of the signs, and distributing their press. One called Socialist Voice, which cost me a quarter, wasn't badly produced.

Besides the socialists protesting El Salvador, acid rain, the scallop treaty, and the pacifists were well-represented. There was a minimum of the lunatic fringe.

One man was dressed in a grey Ku Klux Klan outfit, and he and friend took turns waving a stars and stripes with a swastika stained on with shoe polish. Good fun, I thought.

It was well after noon, Ronnie and Pierre were running their talks longer than planned. Suddenly there they were, into the car. (Earlier, he had stopped to speak, and Pierre asked us to give the President a cheer. The crowd complied, weakly.)

Now the cops cleared the roadway out to Wellington St., so our beloved heads of state could make their getaway, to lunch. The whole crowd rushed to the roadside barriers, to willfully express their opinions, of course. I think I saw the President's right hand.

Jesus Christ, I thought. A thousand or more people screaming "Yankee go home" and "keep your acid rain", and this guy is waving. I guess they really do wind him up every morning.

By the time the cars reached the gates onto Wellington, their tires were screaming.

Back on the steps, the El Salvador folks stood aside, first for Prince Edward Island Tory MP, Tom McMillan, then for Ontario NDP MPP, Evelyn Gigantes, who is running a tough re-election campaign.

Both had a bit to say about acid rain, an issue that got all the crowd responding, and was well-represented. In fact the biggest sign on the Hill said "Stop Acid".

Afterwards, McMillan made it clear to me he was only appearing for the acid rain. He said sewage, chemical and industrial wastes from U.S. sources often find their way into municipal water systems in Canadian border areas.

I stood on the steps, leading from the lawn up to the driveway that sweeps in front of the Peace Tower. (Nobody was allowed any closer to the building — about 200 feet — without a pass and a good reason.)

I looked behind me and found Ed Broadbent.

On cue, he came forward to say his bit, mobbed, like the others, by cameramen and mikes. Most in the crowd probably only saw part of his face. But the voice was Broadbent at his evangelistic best.

He'd been planning this one.
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Greaty, please come home the children miss you and I keep getting the flu when you're not here. C.H.

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