

# Commentary

## Student politicians remain the same - incurable

by Adolf Verloc

"All politics is horseshit." My opening remark in a recent conversation with a prominent member of the Dalhousie political arena, and immediately he launched into a Coles Notes defence of his somewhat leftist tendencies (and I paraphrase): "Y'know, I'm sick and tired of being called a communist. Just because I'd like to see a world with clean air and water, and no more war, where there's justice for all, etc...." At this point in the conversation my interest had completely disappeared. Why? Well, I've heard it all so many times before, and I'm sure that most of you *out there* have too, in one form or another. It gets boring after awhile, doesn't it?

I should say that the politics of this person is not the issue in question. He has some fair points, as do most politicians. What kills me, however, is that these politicians, sincerely ating in the best interests of

the students, have become so disoriented that they actually take themselves seriously.

Take a close-look at a student politician. Change the face. It's amazing, but do you know that these are the exact same people who were "politically minded" five, ten or fifty years ago? They sure *sound* the same. They're still giving us the same old line about "what needs to be done" and "we're the people to do it" and "where do we go from here?". And all of them are *Dedicated*. Yessiree, they have *Convictions*. In fact, they are so sure that they are right that they haven't yet discovered that hardly anyone cares, or if they have been told the big secret, their convictions and dedication won't slow 'em down one little bit. Look at voter turnout. Absolutely miserable, and always will be, and yet they still maintain that "we *are* making progress".

They're all the same. Those in

the right, left, and the much shit-upon center. I don't deny that there are important issues and problems. There are and always will be. But the same people are going to take it upon themselves to sort things out, every time. You know the types, so I won't go into that. The common link between them is that everything is *Fundamentally Serious*. This wouldn't be so bad if we, the people, took things just as seriously, but we don't, and hence God created politicians.

The problem is, though, that politics does strange things to a person. If you have a natural hankering after power and feel more at home in some silly committee room than in a gymnasium, pub or library, then you were made for the job. However, most of our politicians don't start out like that. Most of them enter into it because of their healthy curiosity. But go up to these people after a year, and you'll see and hear the difference. The individual is gone, and so is the

capacity to laugh. What happens is that a political virus enters their bodies, and if left unchecked can do horrible things. It removes all the originality and creativity in their system and fills it up with slogans, jargon, and minutes of the last meeting. Christ, what can you expect?

For example, there used to be a guy around here who was irreverent, highly-principled, and seemed to have an understanding of the reason why people say "who cares?". Then, he went and got himself elected President of the Student Union, and right now he's so buried under the usual smorgasbord of mediation, compromise, couched phrases, image, policy and status that I doubt he'll ever get out of it. This is not to say that there isn't anything being done (because I'm told that there is), but it just serves to illustrate that if you play the game long enough, it's going to suck you up so far into it that you'll need a good long spell in a

rubber room to find your way out.

At this point they will usually argue that "somebody has to do it. What if everyone had your attitude?". This is a good point, and believe me, I'm sorry for your sake that it couldn't be otherwise.

Can't really think of a "moral" to leave you with, only a friendly suggestion: don't get involved. Let the faceless Student Politicians jerk off to their own tune. This can also be reduced to a cliché. Do your own thing. Go to the Dalplex and work up a sweat. Go out and get drunk. Go and pick up a good novel. Or, as a last resort, hit the books or the computers. Don't forget, we outnumber the politicians by about 100 to 1. And everyone of us *out here* is the proud owner of a face and a little something to go along with it. Maybe, just maybe, the longtime political battle-cry that "no one knows who the masses are" should be reversed, and applied instead to the politicians.

## More than one side to Dal's budgetary problems

by Jay J. Doucet

In response to Kim Rilda van Feggelen's commentary of October 7, 1982, I find I must disagree with Kim Rilda's cynical outlook on student economics, though I can't disagree with her statements on the value of a B.A. in finding employment.

The provincial government does have a bit of a problem. They've got a deficit problem. They didn't consider it to be a real problem before August, because the electorate could be pacified with the promise of offshore wealth and the province's AA credit rating. We're still waiting for the oil boom, and Standard and Poor bumped the province down to an A credit rating last month.

So the politicians scrambled for a new pacifier. They wanted to look tough and determined about this deficit thing, so they started axing the budget. Looking tough and determined, they announced Dalhousie would lose about 3.5 million dollars.

But why Dalhousie? The province wanted as little outcry as possible. Knowing that the administration was unlikely to show up weeping on TV that evening, the axe fell. Sort of. Rather quietly the province has promised to give most of the money back. After all, most of it had already been spent. Next year looks lean in terms of provincial funding, but nobody knows for sure.

Nobody knows because no-one understands the government's stand on post-secondary education. University-government relations are in a state of anarchy. The MPHEC, the government's advisor on education, has become little more than a scapegoat. Universities don't know who to deal with or what to expect. Personally I doubt the provincial government has a policy on P.S.E. other than, "Let's follow the path of least resistance when we cutback". The money for education is taken from the tax-

payer, who is blissfully unaware of the province's dark and devious ways of hiding the final fate of education money. The universities won't get their share of the money until some resistance is shown. That's why we will march on Friday. Last year's march could be shaken off like a bad dream by the politicians, so let's give them a recurring publicity nightmare.

We must march because the public must learn we cannot afford a greater share of university funding. One out of every four students couldn't find a summer job this year. Student resources increased by only 5 per cent while tuition went up by 12 per cent, books went up 35 per cent, and the cost of habitable lodgings in this town makes one wince. The taxpayer must be sent wondering where his money goes.

When the governments in this country decided to socialize post-secondary education, they jumped in big. In 1981-82 the province gave Dal 56 million dollars (much of it federal in origin) for the university's 102 million dollar budget. Which is only proper, because education is essential to the development of our society and economy. Sure a B.A.'s just a piece of paper, but that's where our leaders start. Whether you're a capitalist or socialist you must accept the need for a readily available education for all, unless we wish to regress to the highly stratified societies of not so many years ago.

To be readily available to all, education must be provided at low cost of the student. Students cannot afford higher tuitions. That's a fact. University must be paid for by those who have benefited. That's why the taxpayer and the alumni kick in 7-8 dollars for every dollar you pay. When you graduate, and, hopefully, find a job, the taxman will be waiting. But that's okay. You can afford it then. You can't afford a 8500 dollar tuition, or you would have gone to the Ivy League

by now. Allow me to add that tuition differentials based on marks are a rotten idea. Some excellent students are regular partiers, as the Grad House might attest. Remember, Albert Einstein had a rotten start in formal education. There's a little more to university than marks. Besides, the University already has enough standards to deal with. That's why there's a scandalous dropout rate for freshmen.

But why does Dalhousie seem to have this annual funding problem every year now? Dalhousie now has a deficit in excess of 10 million dollars. That deficit was only 1.9 million at the end of 1979-80. For the last two years we have fallen short

by about 5.6 and 4.7 million dollars respectively. That's only 4-5 per cent a year over budget, but it's adding up quickly. If the university could have increased revenues by 2-1/2 per cent, and cutback expenditures by the same amount, there would be no year-end debt. But the administration finds itself hard-pressed to cut at all, leaving increased revenues as our best choice.

Irregardless of the problems within the University, every member of this community should march on Friday. Students will march to demonstrate their plight. Faculty and staff will march for the security of their jobs and the maintenance of the quality of Dalhousie

research and education. And I hope President MacKay will march with his counterparts from St. Mary's and MSU, to get the funding this institution deserves.

When University funding becomes a public issue; when Mr. and Mrs. John Q. Public begin to wonder if they'll be able to send little Sally to University some day, after paying taxes for so many years; then the University and the Student Union will begin to win the battle for adequate funding.

March on Friday.  
**Student Union Representative to Dalhousie Board of Governors**  
(Ed's note: This commentary has been edited for length.)

## MATU getting established

by Graeme Murray

"MATU is experiencing growing pains," said in-coming president Gerry Cassidy, summing up the first annual general meeting of the Metro Area Tenants Union, held September 28 at the Vimy Legion in Halifax.

The 300-member union is a non-profit community organization that promotes the interests of tenants to private industry and government. Established last March, MATU makes regular demands for affordable housing.

Out-going president Keith Cossey presented a general report on the first eight months of union activity. Said Cossey, "Government is not doing a damn thing for new housing and we must fight to get it."

In April, MATU gathered 1700 signatures in three weeks on a petition presented to provincial Minister of Consumer-Affairs, Laird Stirling. The petition called for

elimination of the Tenant Check. The Check was used by landlords to blacklist and discriminate against tenants.

In May, MATU lobbied to strengthen the process of rent review and to reinstate the powers of the Tenancies Board. The board will exist in a modified form until next spring when the Supreme Court of Canada makes a final decision on its status.

In August, the tenant hot-line was established. It is open Tuesday and Thursday evenings from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. It provides advice and information to tenants.

Acting hot-line chairman, Harold Durnford, says about six volunteers have received over 100 phone calls in eight weeks.

The leases of many Haligonians expire Dec. 31 of this year. Because landlords must warn tenants of rental increases three months in advance, many people are faced with the problem in early October

of whether to move or to remain and pay higher rates.

Durnford used Dartmouth's Octagon Towers as an example of what is happening in the city.

The landlord of the 200 unit apartment building is demanding rent increases from 35 to 56 per cent. Durnford added that MATU is aware of the situation but is not doing anything about it because Octagon Towers has its own association which is well organized.

MATU is affiliated with Dalhousie Legal Aid. MATU refers people to legal aid when they need legal advice. Legal Aid provides the union with practical administrative advice.

Despite its growing pains, MATU's plans are ambitious. It will push government to create standard leases, oppose Nova Scotia Power Corporation's proposed rate hike, and lobby for the security of tenure legislation which would force landlords to specify valid reasons for eviction.