

The Letters/Opinions section of the Gazette is meant as a campus forum for all Dalhousie students. The opinions expressed within may not necessarily be those of the Gazette staff or editorial board. We welcome all submissions, but reserve the right to edit for style and content. It is the Gazette's mandate not to print racist, sexist or homophobic material.

50 cents could go further than you may think

When you pay your DSU fees each year, just 50 cents of yours goes to an amazing organization whose hard work few students know about. The organization is the World University Service of Canada (WUSC). The World University Service (WUS) is an international, non-governmental organization focusing on education. WUSC has been involved in the Canadian community in social and academic development for over 50 years. The Local Committee in Dalhousie is made up of interested persons within the community who are interested in promoting the spirit of international cooperation and have a concern for mutual awareness and assistance among members of the community around the world. Two important programs facilitated by the committee are the Student Refugee Sponsorship Program, and International Seminars.

The WUSC Student Refugee Sponsorship Program is a special sponsorship. Its roots are in the academic community and directed towards refugee students who hunger for a chance to continue their studies. These student refugees are allowed into Canada as landed immigrants upon a commitment being given to the Canadian government that they will be provided with a year's material support, and in fact this all they ever need. As all students have managed to be self-sufficient after just one year of support.

Each year Dalhousie sponsors two refugee students, and my own experience has shown that WUSC students are inspirational individuals. In Dalhousie alone, the students have come from countries such as Southern Africa, Ethiopia, Uganda, Liberia and Afghanistan. The students have been through hardships such as civil war, loss of life of loved ones, loss of homes, and all have been placed in situations that have made it impossible for them to continue their education. The determined, responsible, and caring attitudes of the WUSC students is exemplified through their accomplishments here in Canada, and the time they have put back into WUSC and the community.

One such student is Mohamed Ahmed who came through WUSC in 1994, and is currently the Local Committee Co-Chair and completing his degree in International Development at Dalhousie. When I asked him what WUSC meant to him, he answered, "a second chance. After losing your school, your country, and your whole way of life, it gives you a second chance to succeed."

The sponsorship is not a hand out, but a helping hand to give a deserving student a fighting chance to achieve their full potential.

In Dalhousie this initial material support is funded through various organizations. The Dalhousie administration supplies tuition waivers while the Dalhousie Faculty Association pays for accommodation for 12 months. Cara/Beaver foods give the students a meal ticket, the Dalhousie Alumni Association supplies a clothing allowance, and the Dalhousie Bookstore gives them a book allowance.

The 50-cent levy Dalhousie students pay goes towards a monthly

allowance, other expenses, and to pay for a 'landing fee' of \$975 per head. The Dalhousie Local Committee is applying through an upcoming DSU referendum to increase this levy by just 50 cents to \$1. Mohamed explained to me that, "the levy WUSC receives from the student union, has remained the same since 1985, while inflation has been rising since then. In addition to the rising inflation, the landing fee was introduced by the federal government just two years ago. In order to pay this fee, WUSC has to obtain additional funding. At Memorial university each student pays \$7, in Winnipeg they pay \$3, and even our own neighbour, St Mary's, pays \$2 per student.

Knowing the generosity of Dalhousie students and community we hope that our request for an extra 50 cents per student will be approved".

Shoab Zia, who came to Dalhousie in 1995, says "WUSC is practical in the sense that it makes a real contribution to the community. For example, sponsoring foreign students to come and study at Dalhousie, and helping Canadian students to travel abroad and gain first hand experience in their own field of expertise".

Dalhousie houses the WUSC regional representative, our very own Local Committee Co-chair, Elizabeth Ligor. Elizabeth explained some of the opportunities available to Canadian students through

WUSC.

"We have seminars on mental, social and environmental skills." These are held every year in developing countries. This year's seminars will be held in Botswana, Vietnam, Malawi, Peru and Sri-Lanka. These seminars are aimed at Canadian students, for getting first hand experience in a developing country. All Canadian citizens are encouraged to apply through the local committee, to either be sent on work terms or as a volunteer.

WUSC is one of the very few committees that enable one to define themselves in an undefined community. By an undefined community, I mean stages and phases in life where we find blanks or gaps.

When confusion seems to take lead, WUSC is that bridge that joins people. And when people are joined, the gaps are filled. WUSC is a source of inspiration, for people and nations, to achieve greater understanding.

We encourage and welcome all interested parties to learn more about WUSC, and take advantage of the programs that we offer.

To learn more about WUSC please contact either Mohamed at mahmed@is2.dal.ca or Elizabeth at elugor@is2.dal.ca.

The Dalhousie WUSC Local Committee would appreciate your support in the referendum next week to increase the levy from 50 cents to \$1.

Standing up for hostility in the Gulf

It looked pretty close there for a minute, didn't it? Canada has been criticized in the past for using diplomacy as a deterrent to war, but it looks like it has averted another Gulf War.

The UN resolution, proposed by Britain and backed by several countries, will guarantee unlimited access by all UN inspectors to potential sites containing WMDs (weapons of mass destruction).

That being said, I have to express my bewilderment at the amount of support for Hussein coming out of this country. The protest march on Feb. 20 along Spring Garden Road was a startling example of this with many signs insisting we drop food and medical supplies rather than bombs.

Why? So Hussein can allocate these supplies into his military rather than his people? Let me remind you that he is a despot and has no channels to go through like in a liberal democracy. The UN have offered a \$7.4-billion deal of oil-for-supplies over six months, but no provisions on how this will be distributed amongst his people.

A really stupid statistic being fired around is that economic sanctions, imposed since the Gulf War, have been killing 5,000 children a year. First off, this statistic can be easily discredited because it is a mere estimate and not based on substantial evidence. Also, if Iraq had a stronger economy it would only enhance its revenues and leave more money for

its weapons research.

Another myth being propagated is that the U.S. is predominantly interested in bombing Iraqi civilians, cleverly referred to as "women and children" to bolster your sympathy. Folks, some of the most outrageous lies go unchallenged, and it befuddles me. The U.S. air strikes are designed to hit key military targets like radar stations and airport hangars. Is there anyone who believes that the U.S. is striking at villagers?

That's more up Hussein's alley. Since the Gulf War he has been persecuting the Kurdish tribes of the north in a near-genocidal fashion. If anyone is a threat to Iraqi civilians, it's their own leader.

There is also strong evidence by the much-maligned UN inspectors that Hussein was testing his biological and chemical agents on prisoners of war and even his own citizens. Ditches 40 kilometres south of Salman Pak were discovered in 1994 that were not there before the Gulf War. When questioned if biological weapons were stored in the ditches, Major General Hosan Amin admitted to an inspector that "there are only bodies in there."

Hussein has even had his own son-in-law, General Hussein Kamel Majid, killed. Majid had defected to Jordan in 1995 claiming that he was in charge of overseeing construction of many WMDs. Iraq admitted to importing "growth medium" for botulinum and anthrax. When Majid returned to Iraq, he was killed and

the confessions ceased.

The new UN charter is being scrutinized by Russia, China (an uncanny alliance, no?), and France. It seems that these countries have a great deal of interest in Iraq's oil fields. Russia alone is poised to offer \$10-billion in investment deals. But what is Iraq getting in return? Food? Medicine?

No, military and industrial equipment. So much for the starving masses. Even Hungary is set to trade \$750-million (US) for five radar stations. Exactly where are they getting all that wealth?

Similar protests in the US occurred, probably the most memorable one at Ohio State University two weeks ago. Secretary of State Madeline Albright, Secretary of Defense William Cohen, and National Security Adviser Sandy Berger were holding a Town Hall meeting hosted live on CNN to discuss the impending fracas in the Middle East. It was disrupted by students chanting in a rhetoric-laced

manner, "One, two, three, four-we don't want your racist war!" Gee, I like Coolio's version much better.

My point being, a pro-Iraqi stance is in support of murder and terrorism. It's especially disturbing to see so many Middle Eastern students doing this. Don't you care that Saudi Arabia, Iran, Syria, and Israel are in immediate danger from these WMDs? Nobody likes the prospect of war, but force is the only thing to which Hussein seems to respond. Diplomacy is naturally preferable, but if he is unwilling to conform to UN rule he must be dealt with accordingly.

So to all those protestors in the sanctity of far-off Canada, you have the freedom to make these criticisms because others were willing to fight for you. Just remember, in Jordan the police were brutalizing pro-Iraq protestors marching in the streets. Count your blessings that you can live and study in a free nation, one that is willing to sacrifice for your liberation.

ALAN LEBLANC



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