

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.

Charest can join French and English Canada

It seemed like your average publicity shot. Jean Charest was touring his home riding on Sherbrooke on March 13. On a visit to a science fair the federal leader of the Progressive Conservative party was asked to illustrate how liquid carbon dioxide can freeze two roses. Banging the two of them together, Charest and a demonstrator smashed the two roses apart. For some, it was a neat science trick. For others, it symbolized the potential fracturing of the greatest nation around, and how this man could potentially turn that process around.

Charest has been hinting around the idea of running for the Quebec Liberal leadership for a few days, but already his office has been flooded with calls and letters begging him to take the opportunity. At first Charest was adamant that he would not replace Liberal leader Daniel Johnson, who announced on March 2 that he would be resigning the post.

Johnson, since the 1994 election that saw him move to opposition status, had been little more than a federalist lame duck in the Quebec legislature. His acquiescence to the Parti Quebecois prior to the

referendum saw him lose favour to many federalists in and out of the province.

Johnson's decision to quit was a difficult, but necessary, one. His Liberals seemed to be relegating to anglophone-only status, which might have appeared — to many francophones — that only anglophones are in support of staying in Canada. If this seems like a generalization of francophones, I apologize. Lately I seem susceptible to making stereotypes.

Johnson's withdrawal leaves the Liberals in virtual political limbo. Ottawa needs someone

with the charisma and the support in Quebec that Charest can provide. Is he being coerced into the job? Well, maybe.

It seems as if the media pundits have made up his mind for him. Suzanne Poulin, Charest's riding assistant, reported that "whatever his decision is going to be, they are going to support him anyway." She based that on calls coming into her office, which seem split evenly on which way to go.

His reluctance may seem a bit narcissistic, but he has good reasons to be. He has worked fervently to rebuild the Conservative party after the

major election defeat of 1993. Since then the Tories have become a significant opposition. But while rebuilding the federal Tories was a difficult task, rebuilding the Quebec Liberals could be relatively easy.

An Angus Reid poll released last week said that 44 per cent of Quebecers would vote for Charest as premier, with only 34 per cent voting for Bouchard.

People sometimes forget that Charest and Bouchard were not only allies in the Mulroney cabinet, but personal friends as well. In 1990 the friendship ended when Bouchard accused Charest of softening the agreements in the Meech Lake accord, betraying Quebec's interests in the process. Three years later, Bouchard became leader of the official opposition.

The political analysts have all been voraciously against Charest stepping down as leader of the PC party, afraid the Tories will be consumed by the Reformers or that Ralph Klein will assume leadership and destroy politics as we know it. In their minds Charest would be much happier in perpetual opposition status.

The public is pulling him the other way, saying he's the only hope for federalism in Quebec. It's a catch-22 for the party: either Charest runs for the Liberals and

continued on page 12...

LETTERS CONTINUED

The big picture in the Gulf

To the editor,

I read with great dismay Alan LeBlanc's enlightening opinion piece entitled "Standing up for hostility in the Gulf", in the March 5 issue of the Gazette. As much as it surprises me to find out that material of such discriminatory slant is still publishable in Canada, I feel obliged to help Mr. LeBlanc rid himself of the parasites that infect his mind.

It truly intrigues me how Mr. LeBlanc can overlook the negative implications that his article has on his image as a writer. Buddy, to be very frank, your article makes you look like a racist warmonger. I don't know whether you plan for a career in journalism, but I assure you that this is one article you shouldn't include in your portfolio.

I will now dissect your article to teach you about an area of the world which you know very little about. And I hope to God you can pick up a few simple manners along the way.

You claim that Canada has been criticized in the past for using diplomacy as a deterrent to war. When was that? Where in the world is anyone criticized for being a diplomat? What kind of a high were you in when you wrote this?

You claim that the march we organized was a pro-Saddam initiative. Do you even know how ignorant this statement makes you look? Obviously not. We have made it clear over and over again that we do not support the dictatorial Iraqi regime, and any human with a shoe for a brain would have realized this fact, as most of the Arabs in Halifax have suffered in one way or another from Saddam's tyrannical rule and offensive foreign policy.

You seem to imply in your article that because Iraq is not a liberal democracy, it is not eligible for international humanitarian relief efforts. Tremendous thinking. You then move on to question the reliability of a statistic that places child deaths in Iraq since the Gulf War at 5,000 children annually.

How do you know the loss of human lives in Iraq since the war is not substantial? I, too, am sceptical of the source of this statistic, yet I refuse to refer to this statistic as

"stupid". Do you even know what life in Iraq is like right now? When were you last in Iraq?

You then try to justify denying the people of Iraq even basic humanitarian aid through the lifting of the economic embargo. You do that on the assumption that Iraq's economy must remain submerged, since any economic revival in Iraq would increase government revenue, thereby increasing weapons research. By virtue of this statement, you are clearly denying Iraq the right to economic growth, as enshrined in the UN Charter of Rights.

I agree with you that it is not the US administration's intention to bomb villages and people. However, it is inevitable that the human cost of such a strike will be horrendous. This is mainly because these "key military targets" have not been confirmed as armour sites. In addition, inspector reports stated that if WMD locations are bombed, there is the overwhelming threat of unleashing these lethal agents.

And to quote the US Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright, on sacrificing human lives, "People always die in wars, it's worth it in the long run." Well said.

You refer to the protesters as "Middle Eastern students." In fact, these students are as much Canadians as you are. Then you ask us if we care about the threat that Iraq's WMDs have on neighbouring Arab nations.

Well, the answer is yes. However, by virtue of our knowledge of Middle Eastern politics, we can make the judgement call as to whether it is appropriate to embrace diplomacy or resort to war. That is why all but a couple of Arab countries supported a military strike, a situation very different from that which resulted in the Gulf War of 1991.

You then justify a military strike by saying that it is the only thing Hussein responds to. Well, on this matter, history has proved you mistaken. Despite the use of extensive force against Saddam in 1991, the tyrant is still here, outliving most western leaders that led the war against him. Bad news.

And to further embarrass you, diplomacy has worked with Saddam this time.

No single paragraph in any paper I've ever read has been as personally offensive as the last one in your article. Do you not know that the Canadian government was and is still being paid for every army soldier it sent, and for every hour this soldier spent protecting Arab lands? Kuwait owes 38 nations oil-money for its liberation, most of which has been paid. But I don't. Canada sacrificed for its economic wellbeing.

It was the Gulf War that secured

every Canadian's ability to be able afford to fill their cars up with gas, not liberate faraway Kuwait's from a horrid invasion.

In closing, I want to further stress that despite your dismay, most of the people you have so conveniently antagonized are Canadians. Trash those thoughts of yours and get a grip of the big picture, my friend. Things are not always what they seem.

ADEL ISKANDAR

President,

Dalhousie Arabic Society

A Canadian Citizen

ISSU

POSITIONS

The DSU is now accepting applications for the following positions:

TREASURER - full- Time (summer)
- part- time- 25 hrs. / week (during school year)
- responsible for all DSU finances

SECRETARY - full -time (summer)
- part- time- 25 hrs. / week (during school year)
- responsible for daily secretarial duties and meeting minutes

CHAIR OF STUDENT COUNCIL
-Paid on a per meeting honorarium basis
-year- round position

For more information on these positions, please visit the DSU Council Office (Room 222), or call 494-1106.

Please drop off applications at the DSU Council Office or the SUB Information Ctr.

CLOSES FRIDAY, MARCH 20/98, 4:00 pm