

Passing the mantle

There are enough elections going on right now to overload an issue-sensitive student. Not only is your favorite society electing its executive from president to water-carrier, not only is the Student's Union hiding its mosaic tile under reams of posters for DSU Pres and VP, not only is every position on various councils up for grabs, but even the *Dalhousie Gazette* is electing its next editor today.

To vote in the DSU election all you need is a Dal ID and a willingness to have a hole punched in it. The assumption is that every student at Dalhousie will be effected by the turnover in the DSU high command, and every student will be likewise effected by the referenda questions regarding the levies for the Women's Centre and Accessibility.

Therefore, every student recognizes his or her strength and responsibility as a franchisee on campus enough to educate him or her self about the issues and make (several) well-informed decisions regarding university life as he or she knows it! Right?

Wrong. Psychology studies say that whatever candidate is listed first on a given ballot has a quantifiable advantage over the others, simply because people who haven't really made up their minds will go for the first one. That actually works out to a considerable per centage. There are also plenty of students out there who have made up their minds on one issue, go to vote, and are handed ballots for every issue which are then filled out on the expediency of the moment. I even heard one person say she wasn't going to vote because she didn't want a hole in her card... something about the Dalplex machine misfiring when it read her bar code.

Of course, DSU elections are simplified this year in that every issue is yes/no. The only competition for Pres and VP is a lack thereof. What does this say about the campus? The one area where students do make the decisions, and no one wants the responsibility. The DSU is severely hampered by having to elect new heads each year. This means that each year's staff has to spend the first term warming up and learning the trade. It also means there is no rocking of the boat, as each team learns and then upholds the status quo, counting the days till it passes the mantle. The University Administration is the same unified opposition to be faced every year, with minor changes. Talk about dealing from a position of power.

To vote at *the Gazette*, you have to be a staff member. There were around forty people who fulfilled those requirements this year (making a significant contribution to three consecutive issue of the paper), and around ninety per cent voter turnout. Not bad.

Perhaps this says that in order to ensure a representative vote, with a significant majority of students turning out to make an informed decision, each and every student has to be involved from the first opening of the doors in September. With student apathy at a seeming all-time high, this requires effort on everyone's part: individual students and the institution alike. Just as no one is going to do it for you, you can't do it all on your own.

Good luck next year.

Jennifer Beck

the Gazette

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Beware of paranoiacs

I think this has gone on long enough. I promised myself that if I read one more closed-minded diatribe against Dalhousie's Policy on Discriminatory Harassment as Ruthlessly Imposed by the Storm Troopers of Political Correctness, I wouldn't flip my lid. But while I try to straighten out some misconceptions, please excuse me if a little steam escapes around the edges.

Rod MacLeod (*Gazette*, 11 March 1993, p. 13) doesn't like the policy. He calls it "politically correct". What does he mean? What does the term mean? In fact, the phrase 'political correctness' has outlived its usefulness, and deserves to be tossed out (or mashed up and recycled, where possible) into the dumpster of history.

First, Mr. MacLeod should get his history straight. 'Politically correct' originated as a term of derision, used by the left to criticise those who pay lip service to such basic things as, say, gender-neutral language, but who don't otherwise change their behaviour. Make no mistake: NOBODY thinks political correctness is a good thing. It means hypocrisy, insincerity. It was NEVER a movement or a fad.

Unfortunately, its meaning has been altered beyond hope. It is now used by people whose aim is to belit-

tle the work, actions and opinions of others who, as a conscious lifestyle choice, feel inclined to try to change the world for the better, by working to dismantle structures which oppress.

That's the other thing to get clear: it IS overcoming oppression that we're talking about here. It exists. It's bad. It won't go away unless we do something about it.

**Nobody
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Second, in defense of Anthony Roberts, to point out that it is mostly "white, upper class, heterosexual males" who would be required to watch their behaviour more closely under Dalhousie's new guidelines is not "maligning or derogatory". It is simply a fact. That this admittedly heterogeneous group is numerically a minority is irrelevant. Power comes

from many sources in our society, but historically, individuals from this group have held most of it.

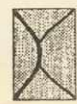
Incidentally, the emphasis in the Discriminatory Harassment Policy is on flexible mediation mechanisms, not on punishment. Mr. MacLeod need not worry about a burly Political Correctness Bouncer immediately turfing him out into a snowbank the next time he looks at a woman (or man) with both eyes simultaneously.

The anti-harassment policy has nothing to do with Communism. In the bad old days, when Communists didn't want to give an inch to someone who disagreed with them, they called that person a 'Fascist' or a 'reactionary'. Similarly, it has become common practice for even moderate politicians to silence their critics on the left by denouncing them as 'Communists'.

Any person who brands another 'politically correct' is pulling the same trick. It means, "I don't have the courage to discuss your opinion with you rationally, so I'll call you a nasty name and avoid the subject completely."

So let's discard the term altogether. Next time you feel like using it, stop: consider why you disagree with the

CONT'D ON PAGE 7



LETTERS

The *Dalhousie Gazette* welcomes letters to the editor. Letters should not exceed 300 words in length and should be typed and double-spaced. The deadline for letters is Monday noon before publication. Letters may be submitted on Mac or IBM-compatible 3.5" disk.

Racists suck

To the editor:

I'm writing to express disgust in your Sports editor's shameless slogging of a Dal coach (a wholly personal attack, ad hominem) and the slur against Ben Johnson: "You're a disgrace, go back to Jamaica". The Dal community doesn't need the violent voice of John Dancy echoing through its halls anymore than it needs another blatant racist.

Oh, he's sexist, too. Just so you know. No, John, racists suck, get your ass fired.

A Concerned Citizen

Union power

To the editor:

Your article on the discrimination faced by pregnant women at Dalhousie, and by Martine Jacquot in particular, highlights one of the most compelling reasons why TAs and sessionals at Dal should organize (Pregnancy no challenge - *Dal Gazette*; March 11). Time and again institutions like Dal pay lip service to the concerns of community members, but only those who can speak collectively with a strong

voice see any action. Without the backing of a union, incidents like this will continue to occur.

A union is a legally certified collective bargaining agent. As such, the employer is bound by law to negotiate the working conditions of the group represented by the union. The relationship between union and employer is one of equal parties. An employer that is interested in maintaining good morale and employee relations listens and responds to the concerns of its employees. It's a lot easier for this to happen if the employees can speak with a unified voice, through their elected leaders. The union is the organization that allows employees to speak collectively, and has the strength to act if bad situations don't improve.

The Educational Workers Organizing Committee is working to create a new local of the Canadian Union of Educational Workers/Syndicat canadien des travailleuses et travailleurs en education. CUEW/Sccte has always had a strong commitment to human rights, and its existing locals have been able to negotiate protection for their members in such areas as sexual and racial discrimination and harassment. Most CUEW/Sccte contracts have provisions for maternity or parental leave, as well as sick leave, which meet the special needs of part-time academic staff.

It's important to note that organizing a union doesn't guarantee all of

these benefits; they must be negotiated. A union, however, can ensure that vital issues such as these are addressed. The university would have to justify (or not) its unconscionable treatment of Ms. Jacquot not only to her, but to the entire membership of the union. It's a lot easier to ignore one person than one thousand.

Jennifer Hoar

Prof wronged

To the editor:

I am writing in response to an article titled "Pregnancy no challenge — Dal" which appeared in the *Gazette* on March 11. I am deeply disappointed and disgusted with the treatment Martine Jacquot received at the hands of the Dalhousie administration. I find it hard to believe that they would refuse a pregnant woman's request for a parking space, and that the French Department would insist that she find her own replacement before she could go on leave. I had Martine Jacquot as an instructor last year, and found her to be extremely knowledgeable, competent and likeable. I have thought about this, and have come up with five reasons why the Chair of the Parking and Security Committee, the head of the

CONT'D ON PAGE 8

The *Dalhousie Gazette* is Canada's oldest college newspaper. Published weekly through the Dalhousie Student Union, which also comprises its membership, the *Gazette* has a circulation of 10,000. As a founding member of Canadian University Press, the *Gazette* adheres to the CUP Statement of Principles and reserves the right to refuse any material submitted of a racist, sexist, homophobic or libelous nature. Deadline for commentary, letters to the editor, and announcements is noon on Monday before publication (Thursday of each week). Submissions may be left at the SUB Enquiry Desk c/o the *Gazette*. Commentary should not exceed 500 words. Letters should not exceed 300 words. No unsigned material will be accepted, but anonymity may be granted upon request. Advertising copy deadline is noon Monday before publication. The *Gazette* offices are located on the third floor of the SUB. Come up and have a coffee and tell us what's going on. The views expressed in the *Gazette* are not necessarily those of the Students' Union, the editors or the collective staff.