

# DSU aims for more democratic Council

by Marie MacPherson

The Dalhousie Student Union is considering a proposal to make the Student Council a more representative body, aiming to dispel any doubts about the legitimacy of the current process for selecting the DSU's Vice-Presidents.

The recommendation comes from the Constitutional Committee of the DSU, which is proposing that all councillors (with the exception of the Treasurer) be elected by the whole student body.

"It is quite common in other universities to have these positions elected," says Jefferson Rappell, DSU President and a member of the Constitutional Committee. "The step toward

election would alleviate some legitimate concerns and make the whole process more democratic."

As it stands now, the procedure entails a general call for applications for the executive positions. These positions include V.P. External, V.P. Academic, V.P. Community Affairs, and the Communications Coordinator.

The DSU Recruitment Committee then proceeds with interviews of the applicants and the committee's choice is brought back to the DSU Council. Applicants' concerns can be voiced through an appeal to the Council, at which point the process is reviewed and Council votes to approve or reject the recommended candidate.

If the constitutional proposal is

passed by Council this Sunday, it will be forwarded to the DSU Annual General Meeting on November 24, which is open to all Dalhousie students. To come into effect, it would have to be approved by those present at the AGM.

Waye Mason, also a member of the constitutional committee, is supportive of the call for elections.

"No matter how fair the system was, there were always doubts about why certain people were hired," says Mason.

Rappell agrees that direct election would help to overcome the image of Council as "clique-ish".

"The new Executive would receive a mandate from all of the students, and it would take a lot of onus off the Council to make a decision," says

Rappell.

Only the Treasurer would remain an unelected position if the amendment is passed.

"We did not recommend that the treasurer be elected, as that person's role is essentially a book-keeping one," said Rappell. "It is a non-political office in which the individual deals with large amounts of money."

"There are, however, a lot of legis-

tics involved in changing the constitution," he cautions. "If passed, it will cost more to run the elections."

Waye Mason believes the cost of implementing elections for these positions is of secondary concern.

"If there are continued doubts about why and how people were hired, then these should be laid to rest. Election and not appointment is the only way to go."

# Feminist writer inspires

by Carolyn Smith

'Gender, race and class' was the topic of a seminar conducted by Roxana Ng last Friday as part of the Women's Studies Seminar Series. Over sixty people filled the seminar room, hallway and stairwell of the Women's Studies Department in their effort to hear her speak.

Ng, a renowned feminist originally from Hong Kong, is presently a professor at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE). Her feminism stems from her experience as a community worker in Victoria's Chinatown during the late seventies.

This work taught her that as an author of sociological work, it is not enough to identify one's social and political origins. One must be constantly aware of how one's experience informs one's interpretations and redefinitions of others' experiences.

There is a tendency, said Ng, for academics to treat the issues of gender, race and class only theoretically. Within feminist circles, she said, 'gender, race and class' are used to legitimize feminist work rather than to form the constructs for empirical research. They are all assumed to carry equal weight, and are understood as variables rather than as forces that influence women's day-to-day experiences through sexism, racism and class privilege.

An example of this occurs when researchers separate people according to the social construction of 'ethnic features'. In this way, they create a phenomenon to study and contribute to reproducing it. Ethnicity is reproduced incorrectly in research by assigning it a homogeneity that does not reflect individual experience within the designated 'ethnic community'.

Ng placed these ideas within a Ca-

nadian historical context, discussing the social construction of race in Canada and how it has changed over the past several hundred years, from numerous first-nations groups to English, Scottish, Irish and French, and finally to elusive multiculturalism.

Finally, Ng described the connections between racism, sexism, classism and capitalism that arise when social worth becomes tied to private property. She emphasized that gender, race and class must be lodged in time and space, and are not universal or fixed theoretical entities. Instead they are interactive and dialectical.

Ng drew many of her examples from her article "Sexism, Racism and Canadian Nationalism", recently published in the anthology *Feminism and the Politics of Difference*. The publisher is Fernwood Publishing of Halifax. This book should be available soon in Halifax bookstores.

## WEEK OF REFLECTION

(Nov. 22 - Nov. 26)

The Dalhousie Gazette will be honouring the **Week of Reflection**, in remembrance of the fourteen women killed on December 6, 1989 at the University of Montreal's School of Engineering from Monday, November 22 until Friday, November 26.

The November 19 issue of the Gazette will have a **special supplement**. We are encouraging both women and men to submit poetry, creative writing, opinions, personal reflections, all materials relating to women's issues to the Gazette office room 312 of the SUB.

The deadline is **Friday, November 19**, for all submissions. Please contribute and help intensify the voices demanding a society where all women are respected.

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