

EDITORIAL

Last Friday's debacle shows need for GM Regulation

There's been a lot of scuttlebutt flying around about the motion to extend the nomination deadlines at the General Meeting a week or so ago. The rumours are flying that Gord Owen made the motion so that he would have enough time to find a running mate for re-election. This seems pretty hard to believe, especially since Owen must have realized that when the motion was brought to the light of day at the next council meeting, it would cost him a lot of support in Council. But this indeed is what appears to have happened. Even the usually staid and at least relatively non-partisan council reps have expressed anger at the way the motion was pushed through and the lack of communications to councilors about the meeting agenda. Of course, the non-staid and partisan council representatives have had a virtual carnival with Owen's blunder, lashing him in Council and making it very clear they have the worst suspicions of Owen's motivation.

The real significance of the controversy lies in two dangers exposed by the hullabaloo raised in Council. First of all, we need a General Meeting regulation to control any future abuse by people pushing through motions. Until the nominations deadlines started up all this controversy, there were very few people who realized what could be done in one of these General Meetings. As Umesh Jain, the chief electoral officer pointed out, it's an extremely powerful technique to get your motion pushed through one of these meetings. The motions passed at these meetings are binding on Council and on the entire Student Union, and nothing short of hell or high water can affect a bad or manipulative motion until the next General Meeting is called. Surely a quorum of a hundred students, as Greg Graham and others have suggested, is a minimum requirement to forestall this.

Not only should there be regulation to prevent abuse of the General Meetings, but there also appears to be a need to real enforcement of some of the constitutional regulations presently on the books. After all, there is a regulation concerning the duties of the President of the Student Union. It states explicitly



that the President has to represent the majority view of Council when acting in his official capacity. When Owen voted for three motions, including an admittedly trivial one concerning coffee and doughnuts in the Council Chambers, he acted in violation of this regulation. Claims that he was acting as President of the Student Union, as distinct from the President of Student Council, doesn't seem to hold very much water. The regulation was instituted in Robert Sampson's year as Council President, due to fears of just such an

action by the Council President, and to ensure the representation of Council opinion in NUS and SUNS conferences, and in the Board of Governors. Hopefully, the constitutional committee will act promptly to resolve whatever ambiguity there is in the present regulation, and it will be fixed up so that nobody will be tempted to play fast and loose with the constitution in the future. The Student Union of Dalhousie University is not a junior high school council. Over half a million dollars passes through the Student Union

every year, and when you're talking about that sort of an organization, there has to be some pretty strict application of the internal rules.

It is also to be hoped, of course, that the whole affair won't be forgotten as soon as the elections are over.

The whole election so far has consisted of more mud-slinging than discussion of the issues, so it is to be hoped that some of the candidates won't conveniently forget all about the constitution and the General Meeting after the final results are tabulated on March 13.

the Dalhousie Gazette

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