

Exxon Valdez anniversary...

Nothing much to celebrate about

On this the second anniversary of the Exxon Valdez spill, off the coast of Alaska, Haligonians are reminded of their own mini-disaster. The **Editorial** March 10 spill in the Halifax Harbour lacks the sensationalist attraction of its precursor but it is worth noting. True, only 180 barrels of oil leaked from the "Lucien Paquin"; and when engineers became aware of the spill a boom was placed around the freighter and containment was achieved. But put into perspective, this tiny spill is close to being relatively equivalent, in Nova Scotia terms, to the Exxon disaster.

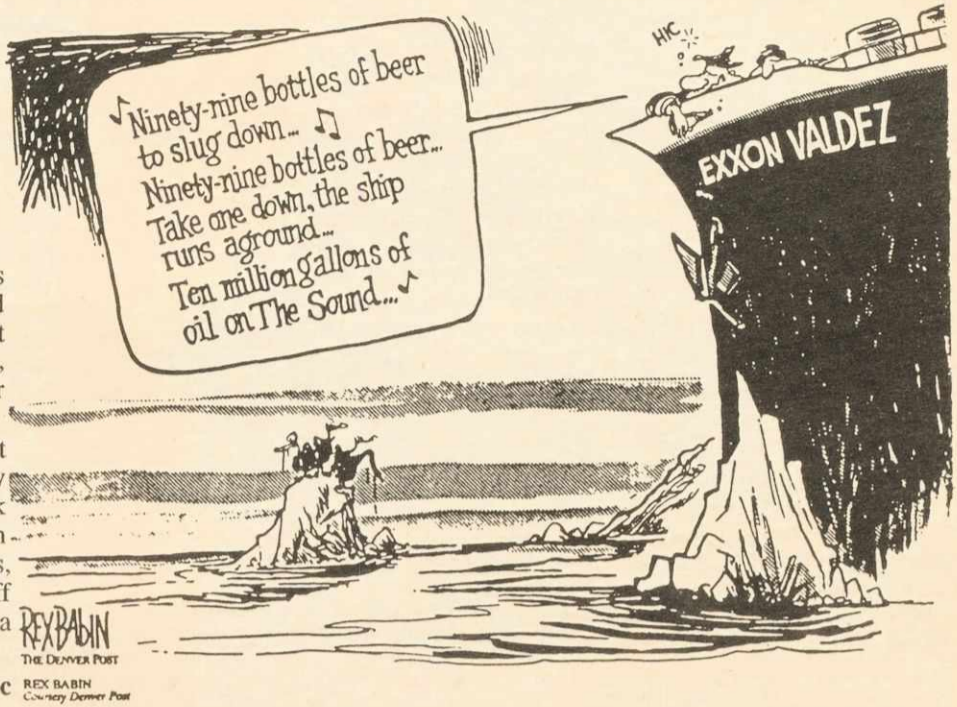
So what has been done to prevent this from happening again. Well, the oil companies are doing their part to a certain extent. Imperial Oil has announced that it is looking into booming all ships before refuelling them. As well, a co-operative of oil companies is planning to open an emergency

resource centre to deal with small spills. But what of the Government. Why are they not taking the initiative to ensure that such measures be taken.

It is commendable that the oil companies are taking matters into their own hands, but lets face it, much of this is public relations window dressing. Not to put their civic intent into question, but once the spill issue blows over it is likely they will relax their good intents. So it is up to the government to set up laws and regulations to ensure adherence, as well as allocate funds to set up a proper infrastructure.

This may seem a rather trivial issue right now, I mean the Halifax Harbour is pretty polluted already. But when one takes a look at the devastation left behind on the Alaskan coast one realises that laws regulating ships, using our waters, are necessary to ward off the possibility of this happening in Nova Scotia.

Marie-France LeBlanc



Sober second thought on Gazette

by Piotr Trela

On March 18 I attended a meeting about the future of the *Gazette*. The discussion was heated. There was a clear division of opinions. After every pronouncement either people on my right or people on my left clapped — but never at the same time.

Two visions of the *Gazette*, two visions of responsible journalism, two visions of free press collided; the controversy over whether to be balanced or to have a profile, to reflect different opinions of all people at Dal or to present mainly views of those who care (i.e. who spend their time to work for the *Gazette*), to reflect the views of a majority or to be a voice for those who would otherwise be deprived of access to the media, to be objective and describe the world or to be subjective and try to change this world. No easy answers.

For me the crucial question was what it means to be an alternative paper. One of the panelists said, "If you want to have the white male pro-war perspective, take the *Globe and Mail*. You have one side already in the mainstream media, so we have to be the other side, to be the alternative.

The answerer cited Alex Burton, the co-editor of the *Gazette* who supposedly said, "many people do not read anything else at all, so the *Gazette* is for them the main source of information." The conclusion: many people are left with one side only.

I would go even further — if you want to be different from, not only opposed to, the mass media, it is you who should set standards of objective coverage. To be truly objective is what it takes to be an alternative.

I agree with critics of the *Gazette*, that a student newspaper

should be open to different views. I do not agree with them on how to

implement it. I believe that this goal may be achieved through the

conscience of the *Gazette* staff only (hopefully stimulated by this

discussion). I do not believe in any formal measures that might enforce this change.

Some critics proposed specific guidelines or a consulting body. Despite declared intentions, it would probably result in more, not less, censorship. Save the readers it may alienate those few who actually make the *Gazette*.

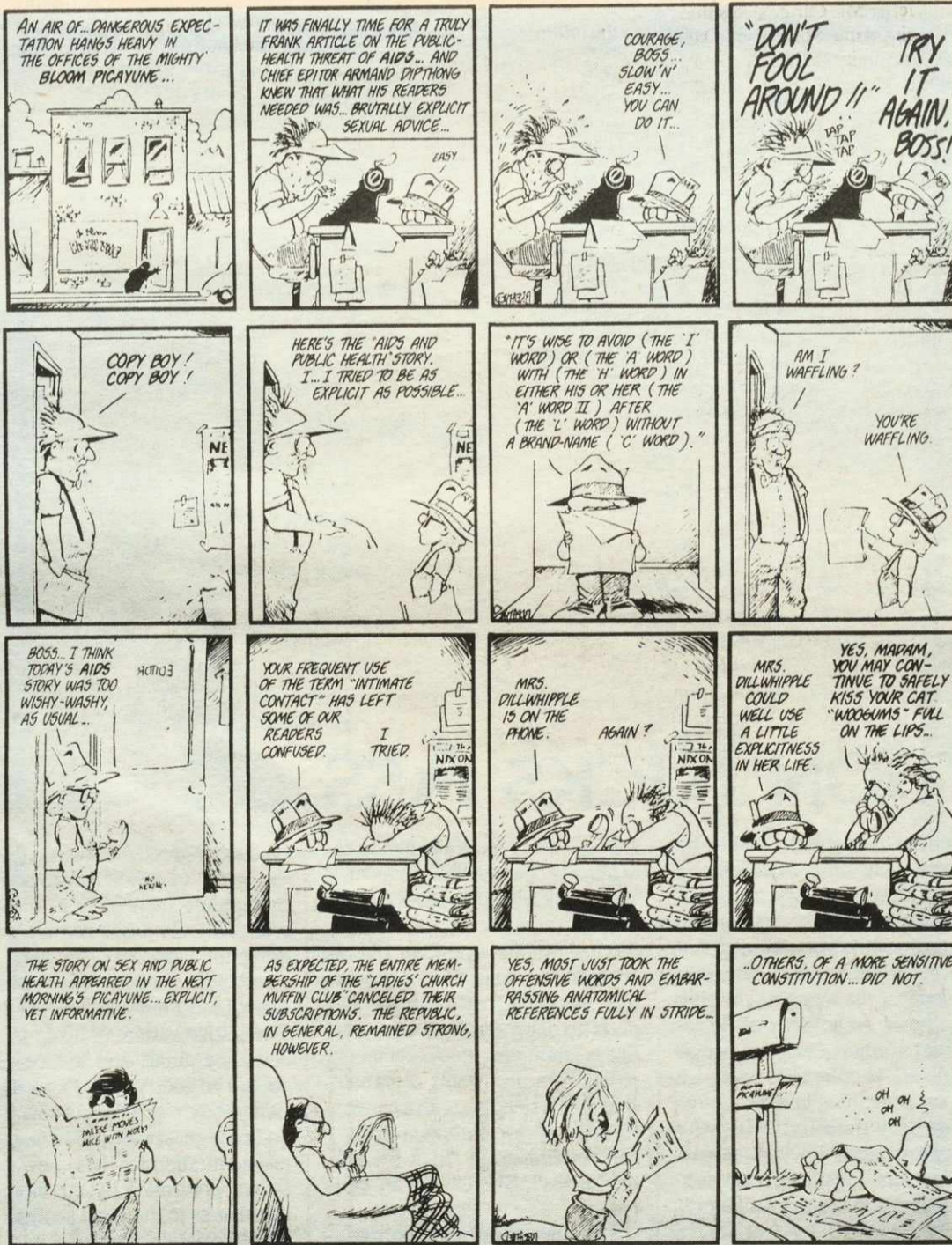
The idea of popular elections of the editors is ludicrous. The criteria of such a choice would be like those of the students' representatives — a nice photo and an interesting name. We would end up with a less professional editor and still there would be no guarantee that this person would be open to views other than those of a handful of friends who helped win the election.

The ultimate question is to shut down the *Gazette*. But then the question would be, what instead? A new *Gazette*? The problems would be the same. Or no student paper at all. Is this what we want?

A formal shutdown is an extreme and is kept by critics as the ultimate there at to get concessions. But this threat easily may get out of their control. If the regulations mount the regular staff may resign. Will the critics have enough experience, time and will to keep the *Gazette* going?

It seems that the *Gazette* case will be discussed at the general meeting of Dal students. Your choices and your words (or lack of them) may have consequences reaching further than you expect.

P.S. To my satisfaction I found at the meeting that people can express themselves concisely, precisely and wittily. Arguments were interesting on both sides; emotions were intense. This is exactly what I expect to find in a student paper...



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