

Campus guerillas challenge BoG



Who - or what - is under all that fur?

DALPHOTO: MIKE DEVONPORT

by Judy Reid

"How many Board of Governors does it take to change a lightbulb?" asks a poster in bold print. The answer? According to the Guerilla Grrrls Against the Gag (GGAG), the Board of Governors doesn't change anything.

The Guerilla Grrrls are made up of more than thirty women and a handful of men who are trying to revive Dalhousie's proposed anti-hate policy.

Gorilla-masked, the Grrrls have been ambushing public meetings, students on the street and bathroom stalls with pamphlets and posters challenging the Board's right to reject the discriminatory harassment policy.

"The BoG is not representative of the Dalhousie community," said Godzilla, a spokesperson for the Grrrls. "Not that they're necessarily bad people, but I don't know what the heck they have to do with our university."

The Grrrls made their first "consciousness-raising ambush" last Friday at Dalhousie's Student Appreciation Night. Students didn't appear shocked to have six women in gorilla masks interrupt the awards ceremony, and the Grrrls didn't stick around long enough to gauge students' reactions.

"I don't think they ruined the evening," said Godzilla Guerilla.

The original policy set out guidelines to mediate conflicts dealing with racism and sexism. The controversial policy was condemned by many as a politically-correct tactic that threatened students' and professors' freedom of speech.

"It's not about white-male bashing or eating the rich," said Godzilla. "Nobody's going to get punished. No books are going to get burned."

The Guerilla Grrrls are angry that the Board of Governors gagged the Senate by rejecting the policy after Senate had passed it. According to

"The BoG is not representative of the Dal community."

Godzilla, the Senate is more representative of the Dalhousie community than the Board of Governors.

"The BoG has set a really bad precedent," she said. "It's made the Senate a useless body with no real power."

Although there are close to three dozen Guerilla Grrrls, there's a reason why the public only sees six at a time:

Money.

"We don't want to be an expensive terrorist movement," explained Godzilla. The gorilla costumes are rented by the week, so the Grrrls must take turns dressing for their ambushes.

One of the reasons why the Grrrls

Students pay more

by Gazette staff

In choosing to cancel the CFS membership referendum, the DSU Council left itself in a financial lurch.

Dal students pay four dollars to the Canadian Federation of Students, and a key issue for the 'No' campaign was CFS' request for a fee hike to six dollars. If Dal students had voted 'Yes' to stay in the organization, they would have been accepting the fee increase.

CFS rules say that if a school does not vote for the increase, the organization may decide to impose the higher fee anyway, if two thirds of the schools accept it.

Many DSU councillors expected CFS to impose the increase at its May meeting. If that happened, the DSU could be stuck with a bill for about \$20,000 — two extra dollars for every student at Dal.

After bitter and emotional debate on Sunday, the council voted to increase student union fees by two dollars to make up the expected shortfall.

Some thought this a betrayal of Dal students, who didn't get a chance to vote on it.

"I'm not pleased with it," said Jeff Rappell, the DSU President. "I'm

are masked is that they fear repercussions such as getting low marks or not receiving a promotion. The other motive is publicity.

"It is a calculated media stunt," admitted Godzilla. "I don't know if people really care who we are."

The Guerilla Grrrls attended a Senate meeting on Monday, March 28 and plastered posters across campus the same day. There's no word as to who or what the next ambush will involve or when it'll take place.

"All the mystery and fun is that one never knows when we'll strike again," said Godzilla.

One of Godzilla's biggest gripes about reaction to the proposed policy is the number of people who have condemned it without even reading it.

"Information is your best tool," she said. "And a lot of people are misinformed."

According to Godzilla, one piece of misinformation was that the committee which was proposed to hear complaints of harassment would have the power to punish offenders. Godzilla stressed that the committee's role was to mediate conflict.

"It's not eight angry people waiting to fry whoever comes through," said Godzilla. "And even if they wanted to, they couldn't."

The Guerilla Grrrls' goal is to have the discriminatory harassment policy referred back to the Senate. Godzilla doesn't know when or if that will happen, but said the Grrrls will still have accomplished something.

"We have at least raised awareness that there is another side to the issue — and we made some people laugh."

always upset when Dalhousie students don't get their say."

Lisa Lachance agreed. "We have a \$2.5 million budget," she said. "Twenty thousand is not that much to come out of our budget."

But Rod MacLeod, the incoming DSU President, said hiking fees is better than leaving the union in a precarious financial position.

In speaking in favour of the increase at the meeting, MacLeod said, "While it's true and nice to talk about how we shouldn't increase the fee without asking students, we're responsible for the finances of the Dalhousie Student Union."

Fraser Matte, the DSU Treasurer, argued if the fee was increased, the money would end up coming out of students' pockets anyway, in the form of decreased DSU services.

Josef Tratnik, the representative of the Bisexuals, Gays and Lesbians at Dalhousie (BGLAD), agreed. He said CFS had left the DSU with no choice.

"CFS has decided to stick it to the students," he said, "so let's let them stick it to the students." He said when the DSU holds a referendum in the fall, students can vote on whether the extra two dollars fee is acceptable.

CFS referendum cancelled

by Robert Drinkwater

With less than 24 hours before polls were scheduled to open, the DSU got the willies and cancelled its referendum on membership in the Canadian Federation of Students.

Until Sunday afternoon, all systems were go for the vote on whether Dalhousie students would continue to be members of CFS, a 12-year-old student lobby group representing about seventy student unions. But things changed when CFS's lawyers faxed the DSU with a warning the national organization would refuse to accept the results of the referendum. Many on council feared this could open the DSU up to a court challenge from CFS.

Council met in a closed session on Sunday afternoon to discuss whether it should proceed with the referendum, scheduled to start at 9:00 Monday morning. After more than an hour of debate, the vote was 17-16 to cancel.

CFS began to cry foul last month over how the DSU informed them the vote was taking place. According to the CFS constitution, notice of a referendum on membership must be sent by registered mail six months in advance of the vote. CFS was upset that the DSU gave its six months' notice back in September by fax, and then sent further details three weeks later by Purolator Courier.

Many councillors feared the DSU could face a lawsuit from CFS if it

pulled out based on the results of an 'unrecognised' referendum. The fact that Dalhousie students have been members of CFS and have paid fees to the organization for over 10 years, they argued, might constitute a legally binding contract. This could bind the DSU to follow CFS rules.

But not all on council wanted to stop the referendum. DSU president Jefferson Rappell says CFS is screwing Dal students around. He says CFS waited until February, over four months after the DSU gave notice of the referendum, before voicing any objections. He suspects CFS probably changed its mind when national chair Carl Gillis flew down for the campaign and saw the extent of anti-CFS feeling on the Dalhousie campus.

"When they started realizing 'Hey, we're in hot water here,' they said 'let's go to our lawyers and try to rope them in and try to make them be a member for longer than they want to be,'" Rappell said.

But Carl Gillis, the national Chair of CFS, tells a different story. He says he had been trying to get the official documentation for the referendum from Rappell and DSU VP External Lisa Lachance since last fall.

"We've explained to them from the beginning that there were problems with the referendum in terms of notice. In our opinion, there was never a proper referendum called," Gillis said.

"I talked to both Jefferson and

Lisa last term asking for verification that the question was sent, because I hadn't received it, and they indicated to me that they were quite certain that all the rules were followed. But they never were, and I brought it up several times in the fall. I brought it up again when I was on campus and I chaired their council meeting in January. And I brought it up again to Jefferson at that time, and then again to Lisa, and they assured me they would send it," he added.

But Lisa Lachance says she heard nothing from Gillis about the referendum until Gillis paid a visit to Halifax back in January.

"At that time he had some concerns that they couldn't find the receipt that said what date the Purolator package had arrived, so I showed him the receipt that we had from when the package arrived," she says.

"Jefferson Rappell also showed him the letter that had been sent at the time," she added, "and according to him [Gillis], everything was fine. He had started to make plans to come down and help us with our referendum."

Even though Lachance campaigned for the "CFS-Yes" side in the referendum, she says she resents the way some people in the organization have treated the DSU. But she still believes CFS is valuable to Dalhousie.

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