

## My Canada includes...

Lately, I've been wondering exactly what it is about Canada that we believe makes it a better place to live than other countries in the world. According to much of the English-speaking world's media, Canada would be included in those nations considered to be of the "First World," which means Canada is "developed," "more civilized," "more advanced," "industrialized" and so on.

Even if all of that is not true, and those classifications are simply the snobbery of an ethnocentric white male-controlled media (how's that for a PC catch-phrase?), few would argue that, recent military scandals notwithstanding, Canada's international image is that of a peaceful, tolerant, law-abiding and accepting nation.

It seems to me that, for better or for worse, being all those things also means that Canada is therefore expected to put up with a whole lot more shit than any other country in the world. What other country allows its people to constantly question, challenge and modify its laws, customs and traditions based on their individual ethnic, religious, social, political or psychological background?

Sometimes I wonder whether or not the rest of the world is really looking at us, hearing the news about what's happening here, and just shaking their heads and muttering to themselves: "Wimps."

Face it. There are few other countries in the world that would allow a significant portion of its national legislative body to be comprised of people intent on breaking the country apart. There are countries in which Quebec's separatists would have been charged, convicted and shot for treason long ago. But in Canada, we're tolerant and we're peaceful. We're chumps.

Think about this: If the federal government raises taxes or cuts spending, Lucien Bouchard and Jacques Parizeau scream that Que-

bec is better off to leave Canada. But if the federal government does none of those things and the deficit grows, the Jerky Boys scream the exact same thing.

If Canadians say that Quebec should not separate, they are derided as ignorant, insensitive and interfering bigots. But if Canadians keep quiet about the separatist issue, then they must not care whether Quebec leaves or not.

Find me another country where everything the national government does or does not do is a reason for a province to secede. Find me another country where three-quarters of the population is told by one-quarter of the population that they should neither participate in nor ignore that minority's attempts to change the entire country's geographic, demographic, socioeconomic and political structure.

Then again, consider what else Quebec believes it has the right to do:

In Quebec, you have the right to revoke the human rights of a population segment of your choice when and for as long as it serves your purposes. Hence, the suggestion of a Bloc Quebecois MP that only "old-stock" Quebecers, not immigrants or minorities, should be allowed to vote in a referendum on separatism.

In Quebec, you have the right to label anyone who disagrees with you and anyone who could obstruct your personal political goals as racist. Witness the cheering at a BQ meeting when one speaker proclaimed that Quebec anglophones oppose separation because they are racist. (Silly me, I thought anglophones want to stay part of Canada because of something called patriotism. But then again, what would a traitor know about that?)

In Quebec, you have the right to insult and harass another person if they speak one of your country's two official languages. Which would explain why a francophone woman

verbally abused a representative of Montreal's Jamaican community after he addressed one of Jacques Parizeau's sovereignty committees in English. If the reverse had happened in Alberta, you can bet your ass that francophone would be shrieking for the Supreme Court.

I think Canada has shown enough tolerance and benevolence towards people who have stated their belief that Canada should be broken apart, that minorities should not be able to vote, that anglophones are racist for not wanting the country broken apart and that if you don't speak French you should have no voice at all.

A country with pride and self-respect would do one of two things: grant the separatists their wish and cut them loose with immediate termination of all pensions, worker's compensation and other Canadian social services, no dual citizenship, no human rights, no shared currency or central bank or government, and no automatic membership in trade pacts or international agreements previously negotiated by Canada; or, remove all traitors (the BQ MPs) from the House of Commons without giving them their fat pensions, round them up along with all PQ supporters and sovereignty sympathizers and either imprison them or deport them.

You can bet your ass that if Quebec were a country, they'd unhesitatingly do the exact same to any ethnic, cultural or linguistic minority that tried to pull the same shit they're pulling on us.

Richard Lim

## Ask Jo & Joe

It was suggested recently that we give some thought to the issue of accessibility on campus. As we are one of the most read columns, it was thought that we might be able to expose more of the Dalhousie community to the issues involved in the discussion. So this is it: the first in a series of articles dealing with accessibility.

Accessibility is a very broad issue, with many sub-categories and even more supposed answers. Given that this is Disability Awareness Week, we'll just deal with that aspect of accessibility.

First off, who falls under the category of "Disabled"? This for some is a contentious issue, as there are many types of disabilities, ranging from the emotional to the physical and with much in between. In our research, we've found that for many, their disability has been a great hindrance to their person development, and for many others, being disabled has acted as a catalyst in their development. For all of them, however, accessibility is an issue that they have to deal with on an almost constant level.

As an example, consider the fate of someone bound to a wheelchair, looking for a washroom. Something that able-bodied people take for granted becomes a major problem. That's just the tip of the iceberg. Accessibility for wheelers is more than a question of putting in a few ramps and accessible washrooms. Using pay-phones, using the Enquiry Desk, using Campus Copy; all these things are made much more challenging because the height is all wrong. These things could be easily solved with a bit of commitment and some minor renovations.

There are other areas that require a greater commitment. For those with disabilities that involve motor skills such as writing, recording devices need to be made available. The University of Toronto has such a program in place, and has expanded it to include sign language interpreters for those who are hearing impaired, and large screen computers for those with visual impairments.

For Dalhousie, many of these things could be easily put in to place, and with a little effort, Dalhousie could become a truly accessible campus. Those who are working towards this end will be pleased with the fact that the University has recently adopted a policy on accessibility for students with disabilities. The University is "committed to the goal of providing equal opportunity for qualified students with disabilities." In addition, the University recognizes, subject to its financial and resource constraints, that qualified students with disabilities have a right to full access...

If you have a questions about accessibility for those who are disabled, you can contact Nora Bednarski at: NORAB@is.dal.ca

If you want us to deal with any specific aspect of accessibility, please contact us, Jo & Joe, at: Tratnik@is.dal.ca

And remember, if you have a question, nothing's too crude, rude or dumb. Just Ask Jo & Joe.

Jo Mirsky & Joe Tratnik

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