

State of the (students) Union Address

It's a shiny brand spanking new year and time for a drastic reassessment of the global community. What's going on and to whom and how and most importantly, where do I fit in?

Friday, January 15, marks the anniversary of the beginning of the Gulf war. Last year that date commemorated just another day in the reign of George Bush, who had recently been voted the most popular President in the history of the United States, holding the approval of 90 per cent of his country. In the interim year, however, Bush has nose-dived from being the most beloved and trusted man in America to being perceived as a whining, pathetic old loser. This completes the cycle of his Presidency rather well, beginning as it did with his "wimpy" incarnation. Thou art made of dust and to dust thou shalt return.

In a last-ditch effort to pick up one final (de)merit badge before he's dragged from the Oval office, Bush has attempted to implement START mark II. The original START (1991 version) was designed to reduce the nuclear weaponry of the two signing superpowers, the United States and the Soviet Union.

Over the past year Bush has been sponging up the credit for being the President Who's Influence Brought the Soviet Nation to its Pink Knees, and now he's importuned Boris Yeltsin to put pressure on Ukraine, Kazakhstan and Belarus.

These are the three nations which inherited nuclear weapons when the Soviet Union dissolved, and who have to dismantle said weapons before the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (second edition) signed with Russia can come into effect.

At this point, there is only one superpower. The fragmentation of the Soviet Union seems to insure that the Balkans will be fighting amongst themselves for some time. The concept of Eastern Europe has suddenly become less "bloc," while Western Europe has adopted the open-boarder policy proposed by the Treaty of Maastricht in the spirit of unification.

Meanwhile, our own PM here at home is plugging away at NAFTA and avoiding calling an election, while his status in the eyes of the Canadian people is higher than, say, Maggie Thatcher's was for the last British elections but lower than, oh, pitted prunes.

Where is all this going? This shifting of allegiances seems to make life no better, and the only ones who end up benefitting are the people who draw maps. The advice to think globally and act locally sure sounds catchy.

So just do it (copyright impingement). Don't get involved because of the politics of something, get involved in spite of them. That's how we are all guaranteed to fit in, by taking the six square feet of space around us and making changes in it. Move your personal space around, bug people, come up to the Gazette. If you want to change the world, start with us. If you want to save the world, I don't know...be a politician.

Jennifer Beck

Supply and demand

Serene and unthreatening behind its modest grey facade on Spring Garden Road, the Halifax Main Regional Library might seem an unlikely locale for a public storm over pornography and censorship.

But the spectre of these twin evils has been raised of late, ever since the library's decision two months ago to buy *Sex*, pop star Madonna's latest best-selling piece of controversy.

According to library staff, close to 150 patrons picked up the book from the library's reference collection in the first two weeks after it was acquired, and it remains a very popular item. Besides this interest, however, *Sex* has attracted attention of another kind: a petition protesting the book's purchase, and denunciations by at least one member of Halifax City Council.

The outrage has followed predictable lines. Children might be exposed to the sexually explicit text and photographs which have made the book notorious since it was released. Shouldn't the library keep such material out of the hands of our innocent, impressionable youth?

No, says Ken Burke, the Library's Assistant Co-ordinator of Community Services, for the simple reason that it's not the library's job. "Parents

really have to take responsibility for the actions of themselves and their children," says Burke. It has always been the library's policy to give access to its material to everyone, and to avoid any provisions for prohibiting certain people from getting their hands on certain books — a system which would quickly become a nightmare for anyone trying to enforce it.

But why buy *Sex* in the first place? In a written defense of its decision, the library has made its reasons clear. "Ever since Freud," it reads, "sexual fantasy has been regarded as revelatory of the personality and its development. This record of the sexual fantasies of a woman of wealth and talent is a social document of no mean interest."

Besides, Burke points out, community demand for the book was very high. "I think a lot of people just wanted to see what the heck all the fuss was about," he says. Furthermore, it would be ludicrous to ignore requests for a book which has topped practically every best-seller list in North America.

Lonnie Holland, a Halifax Alderman, has been outspoken in rejecting all of the library's explanations. "I don't care how they justify it," he said in a curt interview. "I think it's offen-

sive to women and it's pornographic and public funds pay for it and I don't think we should be supporting it."

"Offensive to women" and "pornographic" are difficult charges to refute. Unfortunately for Mr. Holland, in this as in most other cases involving published works, they're also virtually impossible to reach agreement on. It would seem that, if the Alderman had his way, all books should be subjected to some kind of virtue test before public funds could be spent to put them in our libraries. Where would that leave Henry Miller, D.H. Lawrence, Alice Munro, Leonard Cohen and Margaret Laurence? All have been denounced by would-be morality squads at one point or another. Censorship, it has often and wisely been said, is a very slippery slope.

None of this means that you or I has to like Madonna. *Sex* is a self-promoting and, by most accounts, rather stale piece of intellectual effort. But could anyone write a cultural history of the 1980s without mentioning Madonna? Not a chance. Don't try to deny the existence of either sex or *Sex* to your children — at any rate, you'll fail.

Ryan Stanley



LETTERS

The Dalhousie Gazette welcomes letters to the editor. Letters should not exceed 300 words in length and should be typed and double-spaced. The deadline for letters is Monday noon before publication. Letters may be submitted on Mac or IBM-compatible 3.5" disk.

Sin of omission

To the editor:

My reason for writing this editorial is the fact that the international community is skilfully playing the policy of; "Hear no evil, speak no evil and see no evil" concerning the country of Bosnia and its people. If I may take the liberty to add a fourth clause to the above — "Stop no evil as long as it does not hurt our interest." This would cap off the action or "inaction" that is taking place regarding Bosnia.

We, as citizens of a developed country, are paying little if any attention to the outcries of the victims in Bosnia. The Bosnians are facing torture, murder and rape. Their identity is being crushed in the form of concentration camps. Their integrity as a people and a nation is being humiliated by evicting them from their homeland using the facade "Ethnic cleansing." Murder at will is the agenda of the UN. May I ask, what is happening to the "resolution" body (UN)? Why are we not seeing resolution after resolution being pumped out and being enforced within days? Did we forget Iraq? I am pleading for the same action to be taken to help

Bosnia. At the time when decisions were crucial to bomb Iraq, the members of the UN were moving like turtles who are not concerned about finishing the race.

From an international perspective this race to take action should have been implemented months ago.



For instance, Bosnia is recognized as a member of the international community, therefore, if the sovereignty as a member of Bosnia is being violated, then why is the world sitting and watching this transgression take place? Again we can revert back to the idea that as long as the mass murder does not pinch out interest, we do not have to take action. Where is our sense of duty towards our fellow humans? Where is the compassion for a people who are going through intense hardship? Where is the call to stop aggression?

The aggression will continue to take place as long as we do not act. The harsh grip of winter is taking its toll on the innocent, however, win-

ter is not the only terror. Losing loved ones either by death or displacement is another factor. Just take time to visualize the scene of crying children, women being raped repeatedly and men, women and children being slain like cattle. If you were in this position would you want help? Let us look inward to find mercy, let us not be fooled by the insignificant help which is reaching Bosnia and let us not forget the Bosnians also have a right to life and a homeland.

Zia

It's no cure-all

To the editors:

On December 14 in Halifax, I was invited to give a presentation at a "Public Consultations on Sustainable Development", hosted by the federal Liberal Party environment group. There were only two members of parliament present, and apparently no advertising of the meeting, so that the people present would have made a crowded telephone booth. My talk was called "Sustainable Development"

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