

commentary

"Democracy dead at the Gazette?"

I write this letter because I strongly believe the democratic process is being choked at the Dal Gazette. I also write it because I feel the matter is serious enough to deserve public attention and might remain a "private" matter otherwise.

When I resigned as co-news editor of the Dal Gazette in January, my partner, Samantha Brennan, chose to re-offer for the position. She was opposed for the job by Ralph English and A.D. Wright as a team. That's fair enough, and simple enough. The election date was posted in the office and advertised in the paper. It was known by anyone with even a passing interest in the running of the paper.

The Gazette has a long tradition of believing any election or job hiring is meaningless without an opportunity to question the candidates. There has to be an opportunity for the staff to see what the candidates' approaches to certain situations would be, their qualifications, newspaper philosophy, and allows questions

about their personal experience to be raised. It attempts to give the staff something more than personalities to vote on when the interests of the newspaper (and the students' funding) are at stake. With this in mind, a screening with open questions is held before any staff election that is contested at the Gazette (and even uncontested ones).

This fundamental idea was thrown onto the street in last Thursday's elections for News Editor.

One of the candidates, A.D. Wright, avoided attending the screenings and thus the staff were unable to ask him any questions. He was on campus the same afternoon as the 4:00 meeting and led all to expect he would attend the hearings. His co-candidate said (rightfully) he couldn't answer any questions for his partner. The staff voted without having any opportunity to ask Mr. Wright anything. The team of Wright and English won. Democracy? I don't think it can be called that.

The fact that an election was held without any opportunity to question the team (for clearly one half doesn't a team make) means the qualifications and abilities of the candidates for News Editor weren't an important matter in the election. The Gazette staff who voted on such a basis only demonstrated their irre-

sponsibility and made a sham of staff elections. Not only does this cast aspersions on A.D. Wright, but it also places Ralph English in a similarly poor light by being Wright's running mate.

The staff elected the team of English and Wright by a vote of 10-8. Perhaps the margin would have been different had Mr.

Wright been on hand to answer questions of any sort. Maybe it would have been interesting to hear his opinions and plans. Maybe it was essential for any kind of a vote to have taken place.

Sincerely,
Ken Burke
Gazette staff, 1983-84
Editor of the Gazette, 1982-83



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