

Highest voter turnout in history

by Michael DeLory

Not only was the 42% turnout in last week's Student Union elections the largest in Dalhousie history, it also set a record for a campus this size anywhere in the country. While Perla Arditti, the Chief Returning Officer, had been hoping for a 50% showing she was extremely pleased with the number of people who voted and generally happy with the campaign proceedings.

A change in the polling times caused some students who wished to vote on Friday afternoon to find the polls already closed. They were originally to have been closed at 2:00 p.m., but at 10:30 that morning, Arditti decided to close them by 1:00 p.m. Her reasons were that few people were voting at the time and a substantial amount of preparation was needed before the election workers could begin the ballot count.

There were no problems with ballot stuffing, according to Arditti. The ballot boxes were locked up by security every night during election week. Any extra ballots would have been noticed the next morning before the polls reopened. However, on Friday night after the polls had been closed, the ballot boxes, though locked, were left unguarded in the open council chambers. Someone had neglected to contact security before leaving.

While the balloting was extremely successful compared to other years, there was a problem with organization. Arditti was appointed Chief Electoral Officer only the day before the nominations for candidates opened. She suggested with the work involved in running an

election, future Councils should appoint someone in January.

Although notices of the in-class voting were sent out a week in advance, many of the Professors did not get them until the day before the balloting began.

In both classes and the polling booths voters were informed that the presidential ballot was preferential, and to mark a first, second, third and fourth choice. Unfortunately many voters only marked one set of names. This did not invalidate their ballots, but made them less effective since their vote would carry no weight should their candidate be eliminated in the early counts. A fair number of people abstained from voting for any presidential team by leaving that portion blank.

The Chief Returning Officer said of the approximately 3000 ballots cast about 200 were spoiled, but not necessarily in all parts. The main problem was some people voted for representatives in more than one faculty, for example for both Arts and Science reps. In these cases the ballots for both sections marked were disqualified, but the votes in the remaining boxes were still counted.

The request for a recount of the Presidential vote was ruled out by Arditti, as Rans' and Russell's 116 vote margin over Harvey and Katsepointes would be unlikely to change. However Administrative Studies and Arts reps results will be recounted as the races were very close.

With better organization next year, and harder work in reaching more classes, Arditti felt the high voter turnout this year could be improved.

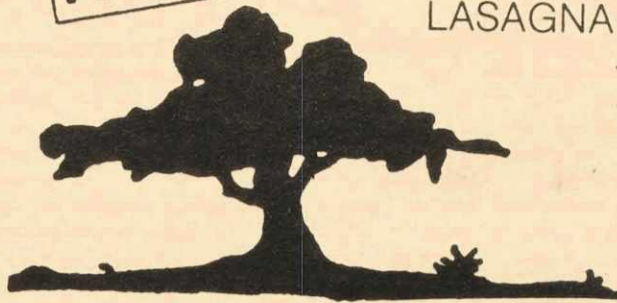
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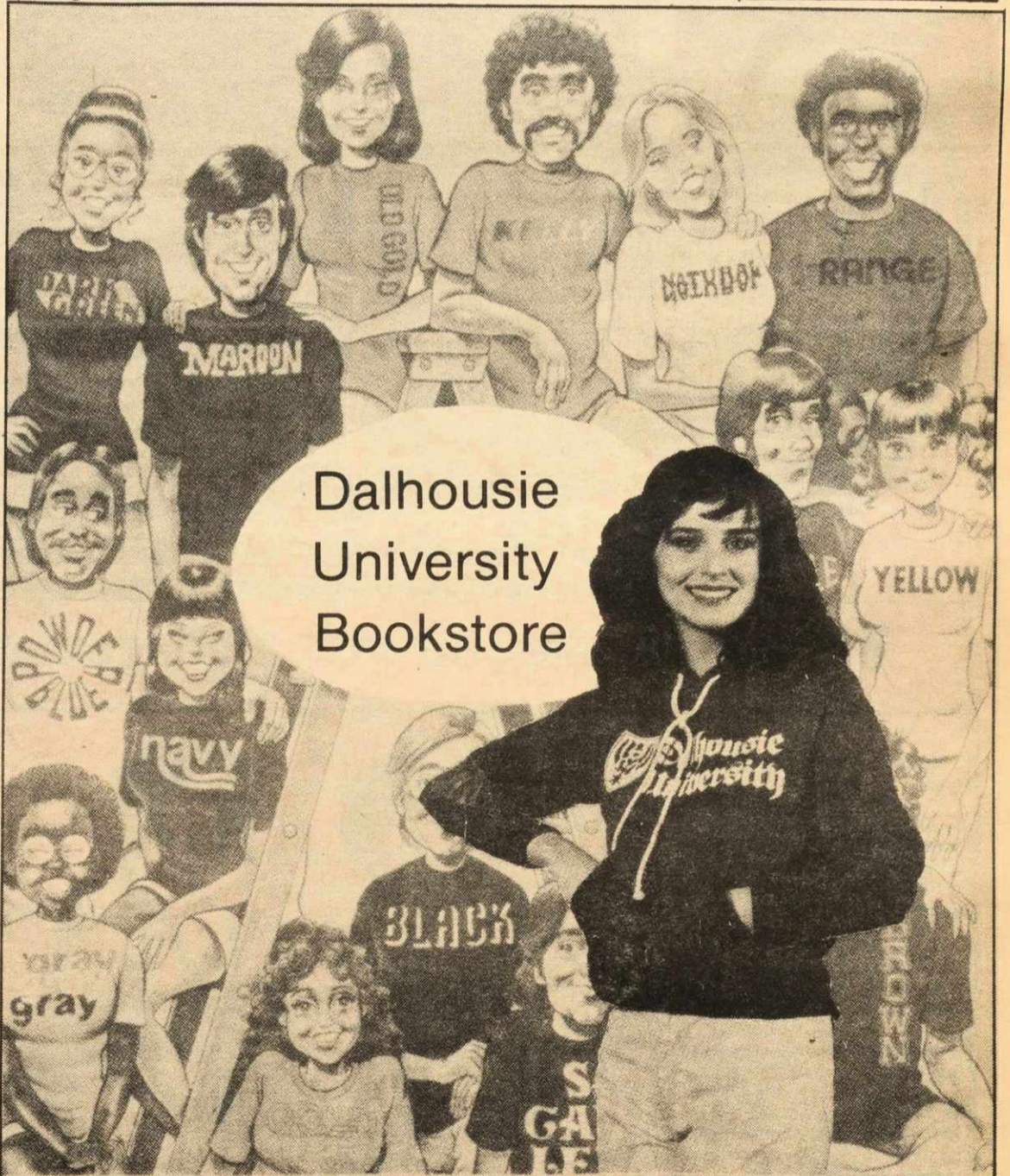


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