

"Line up alphabetical..."

This week's editorial was going to be passionate. I was going to find a topic that spoke to everyone, mattered to everyone, and I was going to champion the cause. I was going to lash out against oppression, greed and hatred with every ounce of acrimony I could muster. I was going to praise freedom, goodness and love in poetic and lyrical terms. I was going to say something profound, something I cared about. I was going to really pour some heart and soul onto that little keyboard in my office.

Instead, I'm writing about the DSU elections.

Every year, more than 10 and usually less than 20 per cent of Dalhousie students vote in this election. And of those who do vote, most will learn who is running and what positions are to be filled at the same time as they mark their ballots.

The candidates will deliver earnest speeches in a number of locations around campus to curious but mostly indifferent onlookers. But earnest speeches, glossy posters and juicy campaign promises are not the key to winning this election. The key is alphabetical order.

The candidates, initially, will say my theory is preposterous. But as they lie at home in their beds on election eve, they will spend a sleepless night, haunted by the alphabet and the blind and undemocratic mode of selection that is alphabetical order.

This theory is painfully simple. The candidates are placed on the ballot according to the alphabetical

order of their last names. A majority of the people who vote will not know a majority of the candidates. Not knowing the candidates means the whole voting process is dull. The main objective then becomes a speedy completion of the ballot. The necessity of speed precludes the voter from reading the names of all the candidates. Thus the first candidate or

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candidates in each category become the popular choice.

As if those of us at the back of the alphabet haven't spent enough of our lives waiting in line behind those who inherited alphabetically advantaged names, the persecution continues in university. Just when we thought we had escaped the alphabetical tyranny of grade school, the inadequacy of the first digit of our surnames is again thrust upon us.

Certainly what I have said here trivializes the election, but please understand that it is not my intention to trivialize the positions which are to be filled by this election.

If anything, Dalhousie's current faculty dispute and the provincial election demonstrate this school's need for intelligent, dynamic student leadership. So why have I written this absurd editorial about the alphabet's role in student politics?

The answer is simple. If I had written a sober, preachy editorial about the importance of making an

informed choice in the election, you would have been unlikely to read past the second paragraph (which coincidentally is about where I gave up trying to write that preachy piece).

I think it is fair to say that student politics is boring. When candidates in these elections step before a microphone, and an audience, they deliver the most unambitious, anti-inflammatory, just plain dull speeches you will ever hear. I'm sorry, but I just don't care as much as they do about school spirit. Is this high school? Are we electing student leaders or cheer leaders? Who gives a shit about any of this stuff?

Call me naive, but wouldn't it be refreshing to listen to a student leader with the ability to speak their mind and with the willingness and courage to stick their neck out for what they believe? (so far the candidates seem most concerned with improving school spirit, and bar services).

Too many student politicians campaign like gushing children and then, once in office, act like sleepy clones of their professional counterparts.

At a student journalism conference a few months ago, I remember a professional journalist telling us to enjoy our time in the student press. He said it would be one of the few times in our careers when we would be free to speak our minds, be creative and challenge authority.

Couldn't this also apply to student politicians?

Do I sound preachy?

ANDREW SIMPSON

Letters

Factory type antics at Dalhousie

To the editor,

In a front page article in the Feb. 19 issue of the Gazette, Dr. Usmet Ugursal, president of the Dalhousie Faculty Association, is quoted as saying, "There is a difference between a university and a factory — to be treated as a labour union and push everything to the last stage is in bad taste... it is bad for morale".

Dr. Ugursal's statement echoes similar pronouncements by part-time faculty, whose membership is engaged in separate wage negotiations.

Full and part-time faculty spokespersons should not habitually justify their case for wage increases by belittling common workers who are members of labour unions.

It would appear that managerial attitudes and tactics have aroused resentment among some full and part-time faculty, whose members demand differential treatment from the "rank and file" proletariat.

It should come as no surprise to Dr. Ugursal and his associates that administration treats their union in this way. When push comes to shove the inescapable reality is that a university is an entity similar to a business enterprise, in that it must generate a profit to remain viable.

Contrary to Dr. Ugursal's perspective, the university very much resembles a factory these days, churning out a human product of graduates who are inevitably just as embittered as its constituents who complain of starvation wages.

MARY MACDONALD
IDS Program (Hons)

Oral decay

To the editor,

Haven't had a cavity in decades! When I went to have my teeth cleaned, the dentist regularly commented on how clean they already were. So the cleaning became less frequent, to the point of my thinking that two or two and a half years had passed since the last one.

The two and a half years were in fact four and a half years. I begin treatment for two root canals tomorrow.

Now I remember the feeling, from a while back, that something was leaking down the lower back tooth. Now I remember thinking that there might be a small hole in the filling that was put in about 25 years ago. I was suffering a bit, for two weeks, when I remembered that I have a good dentist, whom I like, and that I was overdue to have my teeth cleaned. The moral of this story, get cocky about how good your oral hygiene is and it could take a good bite out of your wallet. We're talking thousands of dollars.

So even when all seems well, it might not hurt to have dental x-rays taken every two years or so. Fixing a small cavity is nothing compared to root canals.

My cosy teeth were too cosy (tight). One tooth's problem became that of the other.

Were my teeth sovereign, would my problems be lessened by half? Is sovereignty-association potentially more painful than sovereignty alone? Is the oral decay of politicians more troublesome than that of two too cosy teeth? Am I biting off more than I can chew with these nibbling thoughts?

'Tis better to be drilled than to dribble.

CATHERINE BLAKE

OPINIONS

Intramural hockey and the ever-present Rink Rat

Last week our intramural hockey team was supposed to play its last game of the season. Unfortunately, the opposing team did not have enough players and had to forfeit the game. No big deal, right? It happens all the time in intramural sports.

Naturally, the players that did show and myself decided to divvy it up and have a little scrimmage amongst ourselves, seeing as how we were all dressed for the occasion and a little extra ice time never hurt any of us.

There we were just about to head

out onto the ice when our team captain, Gordon Ross, came sauntering into the dressing room with a solemn look on his face and said, "Don't bother gettin' dressed boys". After a moment of silence and a brief explanation, Paul Salinas piped up and demanded that we

receive our ice time. Inspired by his words and appalled at the injustice of it all, we stormed out of the locker room and onto the ice.

It was there that we encountered the "Rink Rat". Apparently the intramural committee is pretty slack about screening its applicants. Perhaps they forgot to check references, or perhaps the Rink Rat had no references. Whatever it was, there was obviously some kind of error made.

The Rink Rat deterred a number of players from stepping onto the ice, quoting some unfathomable rule (I think it was rule #247, subsection 3c) about how when this type of situation arose, the Rink Rat was to call it a night and head home.

My only point here is that nobody asked the Rink Rat for anything. We didn't need a scoreboard, we didn't need a referee and we sure as hell didn't

need any damn Rink Rats. In fact, a quick vote showed a unanimous decision in favour of the Rink Rat going home. But there the Rat stood, adamant that the lights would be turned off shortly. Who the hell can play hockey in the dark?

After a brief round of firing pucks about the rink, most of the boys headed back to the locker room. The Rink Rat's side-kick took the nets away, and skating laps grows old rather quickly.

One player, however, refused to give in — the man who inspired his teammates from the beginning, Paul Salinas. I have heard from a reliable source that Paul skated well into the night firing pucks at a net that was nonexistent, except in his heart and soul. God please bless Paul Salinas and forgive the Rink Rat.

R.J. MATTHEWS

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