

EDITORIAL

Pneumatic policies for Michelin

I was bounding my way to school on the bus, trying to read the newspaper over a ski-jacketed shoulder, but even while being given the shoulder I could still read the headline; "Michelin to shut if union wins: expert."

If you go on to read the article it becomes clear that the expert just says it's a possibility that Michelin would close if the Canadian Auto Workers' bid to unionize Michelin is successful. From the headline you would swear it was a foregone conclusion.

The most effective threat any company has in opposing a union organizer is, "Well, boys, hate to do it, but we just might have to close down if this union stuff goes through."

The *Chronicle Herald*, by running the headline, allowed Michelin to use this threat without even having introduced it themselves. Now if Michelin officials are asked the company's plans if the CAWs' bid is successful — a terse "No Comment" and the point still gets made — union goes through, jobs in question.

But the looking at Michelin's history in this province, this sort of tactic should not come as a big surprise.

In December 1979, the Nova Scotia Legislature passed what

came to be known as the Michelin Bill. The Michelin Bill was an attempt by the provincial government to guarantee Michelin a union-free labour force as an inducement for them plonking three plants down in Nova Scotia.

The Michelin Bill treated Michelin's three plants, in Granton, Bridgewater and Waterville, as one unit. So instead of a union being able to focus on one plant at a time in getting workers to sign union cards, and then the labour board overseeing a certification vote, all three plants have to be organized at the same time.

Apart from the obvious administrative problems this would present (hence the fact that a very strong union like the Canadian Auto Workers is one of the few unions with the strength and resources to take on the task) it can also lead to a situation arising which is patently undemocratic.

Using Michelin's three plants as an example, one plant might vote to unionize, another might not and regardless of how the third plant votes one of those plants is going to have its wishes disregarded. Sure, not everyone gets what they want in any democratic vote, but when you can minimize that problem by breaking one contrived, large unit into its three natural component



parts, doesn't it make sense to do just that?

So now we have the CAW working within these twisted, deliberately hostile rules trying to organize a union at Michelin's three plants. Just when it starts to meet with some success and has the strength to demand a certification vote the threat of the company pulling out again enters the question.

In that context, Michelin's veiled threat is like the kid who owns the basketball not getting

his way picking up the ball and saying "it's my ball, I'm going home."

The implication is clear, and by passing the Michelin Bill, the provincial government seems to have agreed, that any company coming to Nova Scotia can set its own terms and if at any time these demands are called into question, Michelin, or any similar company, feels little obligation to remain in Nova Scotia.

The people calling the shots here are a small, elite few —

Michelin's executives. How do you feel about such large decisions being made by management not accountable to anyone in Nova Scotia?

So the question of a union setting up in Michelin is not just a question of money, because Michelin's workers already earn a pretty fair wage. The question becomes: are Michelin workers, through organizing themselves, going to gain some say in how Michelin runs its plants in Nova Scotia?

— Pat Savage

LETTERS

Shay review shameless

To the Editor:

After having read the *Gazette's* review of Kurt Vonnegut's lecture, we would be interested in seeing S. Shay's ticket stub. If Shay was truly in attendance with his critical faculties intact, he might not have so unabashedly misrepresented the tone of Mr. Vonnegut's lecture.

Vonnegut addressed some of the issues of American culture and society, but he did not glorify them.

If Vonnegut's "spiel" was indeed "like watching the televi-

sion news," how does Shay account for Vonnegut's critical analysis of the pseudo-authority of TV newscasters such as Peter Jennings and Dan Rather?

If Vonnegut was as superficially unselfcritical as Shay would have us believe, Shay might have made a case that Vonnegut assumes the same fake authority that the newscasters do.

Vonnegut spoke both critically and hopefully of America, and urged students to use their libraries instead of their TV sets for education. It is false to assume that since we attend and enjoy a lecture by a well-known American that we are espousing American values and eschewing our own.

We are not in disagreement with Shay's not-so-original obser-

vations on the "bombardment" of Canadians with American culture, but such an attack on Vonnegut would require a much more subtle and well-informed analysis.

Paul Malott
Karen Morgenroth
Susan M. Brown

Political science protests

To the Editor,
The Political Science Society

wishes to express our strong concern in regards to the current withdrawal date of A and R courses. The Administration has enacted this regulation without student consultation. This illustrates a lack of professionalism on the part of the Administration. The problems it will create can easily be foreseen. A and R courses, for the most part, do not engage in testing before October 6, leaving the student no bases on which to make a withdrawal decision.

We realize that, according to the student Calendar, the Administration is within its full rights to establish new regulations during the summer months. Regulations which are enacted in this fashion reflect badly on the Administra-

tion, for they exemplify its unwillingness to deal with issues in a democratic fashion.

Student rights should be of high priority at Dalhousie. Therefore, we feel that the notice on page two of the Calendar is an inadequate medium of notification. We encourage the Administration to select a new withdrawal date that would more adequately meet the needs of students in the faculty of Arts and Science.

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THE GAZETTE

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Commentary should not exceed 700 words, letters should not exceed 300 words. No unsigned material will be accepted, but anonymity may be granted on request.

Advertising copy deadline is noon, Monday before publication. The *Gazette* offices are located on the 3rd floor SUB. Come up and have a coffee and tell us what's going on.

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