

Council appoints own editor

Freedom of press denied; GAZETTE staff resigns

The last Student Council meeting voted to reject Marg Bezanson for Editor of the GAZETTE, despite the fact that she was the choice of the staff as well as of Council's own three-member Application Committee. After voting to approve Ken MacDougall as Editor, the entire present staff of the GAZETTE walked out of the meeting and as of Thursday, February 1, all staff members have resigned from the paper.

By so doing, Council has violated the Statement of Principles of Canadian University Press and is therefore expelled from the national organization and its national advertising co-operative, Youthstream.

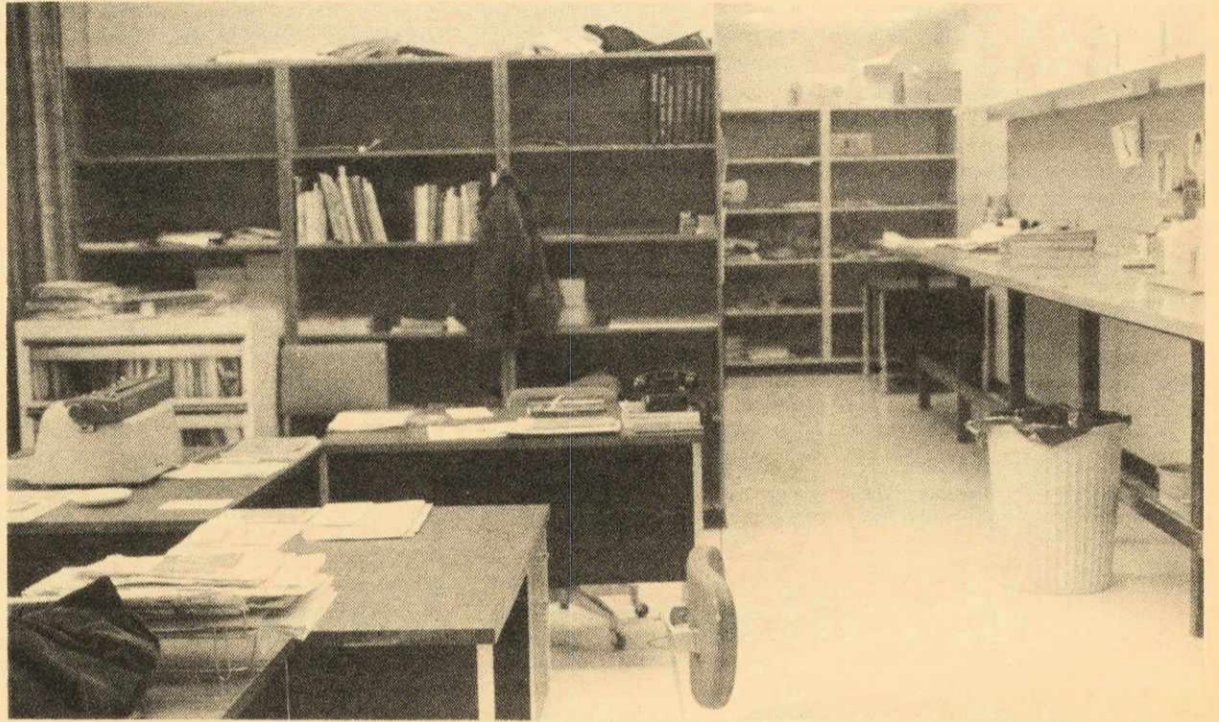
The reasons we have walked out are the following: Many universities in Canada have provisions that allow the staff of the student newspaper to elect their own editor with no interference from Council. At Dalhousie, the decision to choose the editor is in the hands of the Council. The procedure requires that all applicants apply through the three-person Applications Committee which then recommends its choice to Council. This Committee is also required to conduct an informal poll of the staff to determine their choice.

The standard practice and the accepted procedure in the past has been for Council, to accept the staff choice. The rationale is simply this: the staff would know exactly what qualifications are needed to carry out the duties of Editor. The staff would also have worked with this person for the whole year and would therefore know what difficulties could arise. The working relationship would be good to begin with — a very important prerequisite for the job.

But rather than do this, Council approved a fellow Council member, a person who had but a few months of writing experience and no technical or editing experience. They ignored the moral right of the staff to work with the person of their choosing.

It has been evident during this whole year that Council opposed the orientation and direction of the newspaper. They have opposed our attempts to run the paper collectively and they have employed some subtle means to make the paper become an organ of Council and particularly its Executive. The Frederick Douglass quotation on page 1 sums up our feelings of the Council's political nature most accurately.

MacDougall wanted the paper to run autocratically in that he wanted to be the sole person responsible for all editorial positions. He also planned a seven-person editorial board which would be responsible for different areas of the paper's production. But the content, as we understand it,



The Gazette office stands empty and silent.

would be up to him. We can not accept this plan as it runs completely contrary to our journalistic and political beliefs.

This newspaper can be run in a co-operative or collective manner. Problems do naturally occur as most people, upon joining a newspaper, are not prepared to accept the opportunity of having an equal say in the content and editorial decision-making. There is opportunity to pick rather than be assigned, stories. The collectivist approach allows for group decisions, decisions that more than one person make, and decisions that reflect more opinions than just one.

This newspaper, and it is no exception, should be free to act and write as its members honestly believe, within the bounds of legal requirements. A newspaper is not an organ; to serve any function, it must be allowed freedom to act as a check or counterbalancing agent against the institutions and organizations that are affecting our daily lives.

Student Council is a political organization. It can make decisions that could affect what we learn in class, what we learn on the social level; how we act and react.

The purpose of the GAZETTE is to ensure that this Student Council, supported by our money, and given the power to act on our behalf, does not abuse its authority and waste our money. We must ensure that Council is representing the needs and wants of students. By presenting the facts on any issue we relate what IS going on; by our reaction and interpretation of these facts, we attempt to put things in their true perspective.

However, the facts alone and by themselves, do not always speak for themselves. There are always reasons why people act in certain ways, and our presence is to act as a check against their acting in their own interests, whether for their own personal benefit or for that of their organization or structure. If Council, or any other political body, possesses the right to appoint its own editor, the role we have previously suggested is impossible. Even though a Council-appointed editor may not be from Council itself, its decision to appoint a particular person is inevitably based in how well this person will act in their (Council's) interests.

This Student Council not only has the power to appoint its own editor, but it has exercised its power to the detriment of the students of this university.

We oppose completely this undemocratic move by Dalhousie Student Council in rejecting Marg Bezanson as Editor of the GAZETTE. By their actions, they have violated the basic right of freedom of the press. Neither the student body nor the com-

munity will benefit.

Not only will students lose the only critical check that exists, but we will lose in more immediate material ways as well. As the GAZETTE is a member of the Canadian University Press and adheres to its Code of Ethics and Statement of Principles, all rights and privileges will be suspended as long as Council refuses to accept the staff's choice for Editor.

Included in this is the immediate loss of an international news service and direct communication with member newspapers across the country. CUP's national advertising co-op, Youthstream, will stop sending all advertising to the newspaper and this will mean a loss of over a \$1,000 in ad revenue over the rest of this year. It will also cut out any revenue next year, and as Youthstream represents most universities in Canada and is known as the exclusive representative of the university market, the possibility of generating national ad revenue next year is very low.

Youthstream is gradually growing, having been in operation for only two years. In the past year, Upper Canada has received ads first as the market is so much larger. Advertising sales have increased almost 200 percent for some papers. The total volume of sales has jumped tremendously, and the Maritimes too will benefit from the organization. Next year, national ad revenue will undoubtedly increase substantially in the Atlantic provinces.

Over the last two months, the CUP newspapers in Halifax have done the groundwork on the formation of a local advertising co-operative. With the combined efforts of three university papers here and increased circulation and market, revenue is certain to increase substantially.

At the same time, we have been discussing a new co-operative, to improve both inter-university communication, and the reporting of community events.

An independent newspaper is vital. To deny its right to independence, is to remove a democratic right. A newspaper must retain the right to a specific viewpoint as determined by its staff. It also has the duty to relate the viewpoints of non-staff members through letters and contributing articles.

Student Council has outrightly rejected this freedom, and we will continue to oppose and struggle until their actions and their power to take such actions, is changed and removed.

We ask your support to pressure Council to reverse their decision, and we ask your support for Marg Bezanson as the democratic choice for Editor of the GAZETTE. And we ask that you sign the petition that will be circulated over the next few days.

The Dalhousie Gazette

Canada's Oldest College Newspaper

The Dalhousie GAZETTE, a member of Canadian University Press, is the weekly publication of the Dalhousie Student Union. The views expressed in the paper are not necessarily those of the Student Union or the university administration. We reserve the right to edit or delete copy for space or legal reasons. Deadline date is the Friday preceding publication.

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