

Silver linings

I take it all back. Well, most of it.

The prospect of being expected to go through the motions of democracy when no political party was offering a credible alternative to, well, more of the same disillusionment had left me pretty cynical at this time last week. I was plotting creative, non-violent alternate uses for my Enumeration Card.

But on a last-minute whim, I broke down and used it for something like its designated purpose. I protested with it. I know that the loyal, bourgeois mind might consider this a sacrilegious abdication of my civic responsibility, but I'm used to taking flak from my Mom.

How I protested is not important, but no, I didn't vote Natural Law. I imagined some faceless politician/bureaucrat in Ottawa, the embodiment of all my frustration, opening my envelope and having my hand reach out and slap his face.

I enjoyed that. And you know, this election was downright fun. I'd never thought it was possible.

Fun because we knew it was a done deal that the Liberals would win the latest round of Parliamentary musical chairs. That meant anyone who felt like delivering a rebuke to the old-line parties was free to do so without fear of completely upsetting the whole works. A protest vote brought a thrill but no risk. By the looks of it, lots of people in Québec and the West took advantage of this opportunity.

It's also fun to have a radically new look to Parliament. As more than one pundit has noted, the House of Commons is starting to look positively European. Two regionally based movements, anathema to each other, one right-wing and the other quasi-separatist, share the bulk of the opposition benches and are sure to create some very un-Canadian ideological fireworks in the chamber.

So enough with the doom and gloom of the conventional wisdom-peddlers. The post-NDP left has bemoaned the rise of a conservative bunch even worse than the Tories, ignoring the fact that Reform will have to moderate its stance and devise more sophisticated policies to be credible in the long term, or risk progressive (or regressive) marginalization. Voters will not be in a protesting mood forever.

Meanwhile, the patriotic federalists protest too much the Bloc Québécois' strong voice in the new Parliament — loads of countries have nationalist groups in their assemblies. It's not worth dwelling on the moral dilemmas involved in Nova Scotians' helping to pay Lucien Bouchard's salary — if that's the first glaring paradox you've come across in our political system, you're missing something.

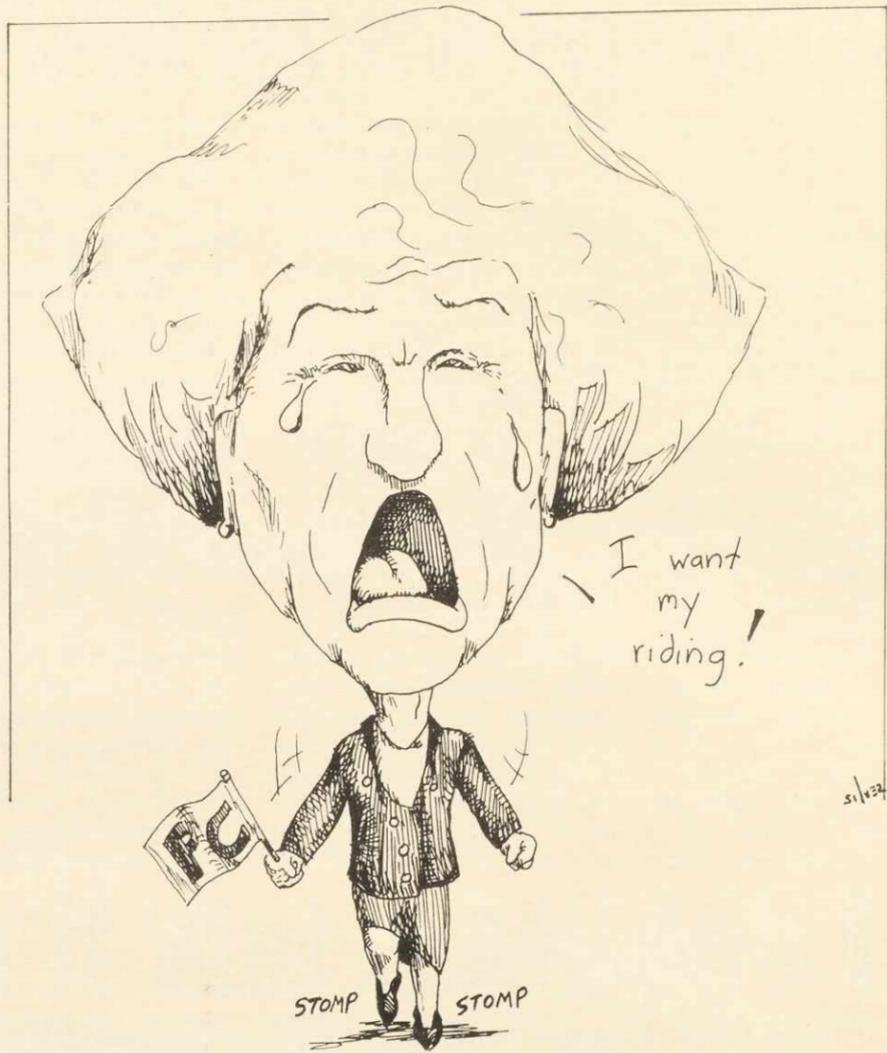
And without going overboard on the gloating, you've gotta love the news that Kim Campbell won't even get an MP's pension. She lost her job in large part to the ghost of Brian Mulroney, now sitting comfortably in his first of (no doubt) numerous corporate directorships.

And to top it off, somebody told me (and the trivia hounds may yet refute this) that the Progressive Conservatives have made history by forming Canada's first party parliamentary caucus with gender parity.

Let's hope the fun doesn't stop here. Alas, I fear before long the debate will fall back into familiar patterns. Jean Chrétien will find a way not to cancel the helicopters after all. The GST will become a new acronym for essentially the same tax. The North American Free Trade Agreement will survive with perhaps minor cosmetic surgery.

Before long, we'll be despairing of how much things stay the same when they change. That's the part I don't take back.

Ryan Stanley



IS THIS A PRIME MINISTER?



LETTERS

The Dalhousie *Gazette* welcomes letters to the editor. Letters should not exceed 300 words in length and should be typed and double-spaced. The deadline for letters is Monday noon before publication. Letters may be submitted on Macintosh or IBM-compatible 3.5" disk.

A rebuttal...

To the editor:

In response to Chris Skillings' letter in the October 21 issue, I have a few things to add:

My article on the Skydiggers concert was not intended to be printed as a review. That was an editorial decision, as I had recommended that it be published as an op-ed piece. I was extremely uneasy about the decision, and had in fact called a "Pre-Show Review" (if the flat is still in the office, I'd be happy to show it to you). Additionally, the headline was not my idea. Titles are selected taking space into consideration, and nothing that took up enough space came to mind. If you have a problem with how the design and placement occurred, I apologize, but I do not lay out the arts section all by myself.

You ask who I am. I am a first year arts student at Dalhousie, and though I have worked at university, high school and independent papers and publications prior to this year, I am new to the *Gazette*. I am a staff member — you will find me in the office most days. (Employment is not the word for it; *Gazette* staff are, for the most part, volunteers.)

Any article you see carrying my name is going to carry a heavy dose of my opinion. In the case of an arts review or article, unless it's a direct reprint of a press release, opinion is going to form a large segment of the piece no matter who writes it. Art and entertainment are sub-

jective experiences. (On a side note, I don't see why 'my' biases are a problem. You do a very good job of demonstrating your own.)

My understanding of concerts put on by any university is that finances are the primary concern when booking bands. If the Skydiggers did well at the box office, my impact is going to be scant at best. If they read the article, they will know it's one person's experience, not the student body's. I don't speak for ANYONE except myself.

On a final note, you ask if I can enjoy myself despite my need for substance in my music. Yes, I can. You might run into me sometimes on the route home, my step almost a dance as I listen to the Pogues. You might see my face, an expression of bliss as I listen to the message the person I love left on my voice-mail. I find joy in things other than getting drunk and listening to shallow, commercial music. And that is my choice. You don't have to agree with me.

Leigha White
Gazette writer, soul-seeker

...and another

To the editor:

I do insist that P. E. James did not catch the gist of my emotional diatribe, and that his letter only paraphrases, well the mentality of knee-jerk-Reaganomics militarism. If he could take off his ideological blinkers, he would

realize that in no manner at all am I saying that war has not, at times, been unavoidable or not necessary. Rather that it is militarism which has dangerously consumed our 'free' society, and most importantly, our children. What use is freedom when our children glorify war, not understanding to what extent war destroys freedom? How free are our children when they (we) forget what our grandparents had to endure to obtain it? The point is that in all wars, it is children who are always the victims. What is nearly as harrowing is the fact that in such a 'free' society as ours, we choose not to instruct our children about machines which kill; instead we teach them to glorify them. That scares me, and it seems an issue which needs to be raised.

James' views of "freedom", "tyranny", "oppression" and "democracy" are warped in true militant style. His beloved B-52s, which dropped bombs on innocent people in Vietnam, were not "defending freedom"; rather, they were destroying it, and imposed a unique brand of "oppression" and "tyranny". While in the Gulf War, they bombed for the ideal of oil, not freedom, because freedom did not exist in Kuwait, unless you were among the minority oppressive class.

If democracy and freedom are ideals which we must take up arms and fight for, then I wonder if we are not already victims of something malevolent and oppressive, having ignored the pleas of Bosnia and East Timor, while exacerbating the oppression in El Salvador and Somalia. With all the freedom and all the weapons, maybe we are the dictators?

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the Gazette

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