

GOD'S FIRST GIFT

The Halifax City Council last week voted to recommend to the Federal government the reinstatement of the death penalty. The City Council is not the only body in Canada that is at present advocating the renewal of a barbaric custom that we are all well rid of. All civilized persons and societies should see this disgraceful practice for what it is - an outrage against all principles of equality and common decency.

The ancient theory of "an eye for an eye" has no place in our modern, so called "enlightened" society. We all accept the principles that no individual has the right to take another human life. How is it possible to justify individuals collectively taking away life? We contend that it is not, and never will, be justifiable, no matter what the circumstances. Surely, in 1975 we can come up with a penal system that will allow for justice to be carried out for the victim's family without creating another victim - the convicted murderer.

Mistakes are possible in any human endeavour and the possibility of a mistaken conviction is no exception. Can we as a society allow one innocent human being to be executed in the name of Justice? If we can then the country we live in is in much worse shape than we think.

The principle that all humans are born equal and have an equal right to life is one that our lives are ruled by. Certainly the cop on the corner has as much right to live as Mayor Morris of Halifax. Unfortunately the cop on the corner stands a much better chance of being killed in the line of duty than do most of us. However, if we are to truly practice our beliefs in equality can we condemn to death the person who kills the cop on the corner? The murderer could be a 17 year old kid, caught in the act of robbing the local grocery store. He has a gun but has no intention of using it until he's caught, flees, panics and shoots. His life should be considered as valuable as the cop's life. It may have been a misdirected life to that point but killing him in revenge is not going to change that fact. The problems that have led that kid to "armed" robbery are much larger than he can really be held responsible for. They are problems of the society in which we live and we are all to some degree responsible, yet we are not the one's executed. At least we would not be physically executed - capital punishment certainly means that we have already destroyed our principles.

Capital punishment is not a new concept. It has been practiced for many years in many political systems and has never proven a deterrent to murder. The rationale for reinstatement seems to be revenge but revenge is not condoned in any other area of society. Capital punishment is destructive - it destroys principles and lives. The costs are far greater than the highly questionable benefits.

The Halifax City Council has spoken out in favor of this barbaric custom. Certainly not all the councillors are to blame. Some, a few, voiced strong objections to this resolution. The majority ruled, however, as it does in this democratic system of ours. Funny, that the belief in equality which is the basis of the democratic system should allow that elected representatives can recommend abolition of the equal right to life of some members of their constituencies. Their sense of moral outrage at murderers going free is misplaced and irrational. The time spent debating this obnoxious resolution would have been better spent examining the causes of crime, the punishments meted out by the institutions of justice and the parole program of the penal system.

The Halifax City Council have shirked their responsibilities to the citizens of Halifax. They are doing little or nothing to inform the public of the crime rate in Halifax, they are obviously denying the principles of equality that put them in office in the first place and they are getting away with it all. Killing does not stop or deter killing - it only encourages it. The fact that the killing is done by a collective group does not change that. If the City Council of Halifax wishes to encourage and commend this end then so be it - perhaps some future Council will have the moral courage to fight current trends and defend the basic value of human life - all human life.

Canada's Oldest College Newspaper

The Dalhousie GAZETTE is the weekly publication of the Dalhousie Student Union. The views expressed in the paper are not necessarily those of the Student Union, the university administration, the editor, or the staff. We reserve the right to edit or delete copy for space or legal reasons. Deadline date for letters to the GAZETTE and outside contributions is Friday preceding publications. No anonymous material will be accepted, but names may be withheld on request if there are extenuating circumstances. The Dalhousie GAZETTE is a founding member of Canadian University Press.

Editor: Mary Pat MacKenzie
Circulation Manager: Joe Wilson
News Editor: Ron Norman
CUP Editor: Michael Greenfield
Room 334, Student Union Building
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This issue's staff and contributors:

Alexia Barnes	Sara Gordon	Roger Metcalf
John Barrow	Stephen Hall	Nancy Miller
Dona Bulgin	Chris Hart	Kevin Moore
Cathy Campbell	Robert Jacobsen	Dan O'Connor
Dave Chadee	Keith Johnston	Helen Spinelli
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Cathy Crouse	Regna Kcin	Rick Whitby
L. Daye	Debbis Krycha	Greg Zed
Joel Bournier		



Huskies

To the GAZETTE:

I am writing the following letter in response to an article by Keith Johnston in your January 30th issue of the Dalhousie Gazette concerning his criticism of Saint Mary's University in his write-up on the last Dal-SMU basketball game:

"Dalhousie University is a rather odd place, you know. Where else in Canada, or perhaps the world, would one find a college basketball game played in a gym in a Physical Education Building that is in much worse condition for basketball than the basement of a Church of their beloved neighbor? Where else would one find a school the size of Dalhousie which cannot generate enough enthusiasm toward athletics to find a half dozen girls to cheer for their sports teams? Where else would one find such mongrels (called fans) who find pleasure in throwing things at and swearing at visiting cheerleaders? Where else would one find a school the size of Dalhousie which will not purchase a 30-second timer and which must rely on SMU to provide the timer for all their home games? Where else would one find a gym with only one entrance through which the large crowd must flow -- the same entrance that the players must force their way through in order to reach the gym? Where else would one find such stupidity displayed in that after three-quarters of the gym is full, the campus police clear the gym, forcing everybody to go outside and come back in again? Where else would one find a school newspaper that would entail the services of an obviously biased cry-baby, such as Keith Johnston, whose irresponsibility as a sports reporter was vividly displayed in the January 30th issue of the Dalhousie Gazette? Only at Dal, you say??

I would hope that you take this letter seriously and print it in a future edition of your paper, if possible, so that your readers are able to see both

sides of the story.

Yours truly,
G. Walsh

P.S. Actually the Church was just an after-thought anyway. It just so happens that it was built on the roof of the gymnasium!

Babies

To the GAZETTE:

It appears as though various groups in Canada are again preparing for combat over the issue of abortion. In light of the recent publicity given to individuals from both camps, I would like to take the time to underscore the importance of learning and correctly using effective BIRTH CONTROL methods. Somehow, birth control, the first line of defense against an unwanted pregnancy, is ignored in the shuffle.

There are many very effective methods of birth control which will prevent pregnancy if used correctly. Some are short-term and reversible, e.g., the pill, IUD, diaphragm, condom. Other methods are permanent and irreversible, e.g., tubal ligation (female) and vasectomy (male sterilization). Your physician can give you information about and prescribe the various birth control methods.

I would also like to bring to your attention the Planned Parenthood Association of Nova Scotia. This is a group of people throughout the province who can give you information about birth control and help you select the best method for you. Planned Parenthood is committed to making birth control information more available to you and to improving the level and amount of medical service presently available in Nova Scotia. The association offers free literature and instructional workshops to groups. Contact Planned Parenthood Ass'n. of N.S., P.O. Box 7042 N, Halifax, for more information about these services.

Sincerely,
Mary Ellen Matisse
Executive Director
Planned Parenthood
Ass'n of N.S.