

* the views expressed in the letters and opinion pieces in the Gazette are not necessarily those of the editorial board or collective staff. These pages are a forum open to, but not limited to, all Dalhousie students.

St. Patrick's Day: It's not quite Irish

BY STUART MCMILLAN

It is that time of year again. The middle of March has rolled along again. It is the time of year when everybody here pretends to be Irish because their parents told them that is where their heritage came from. It is the time of year again when everybody dresses up with silly little hats, and wears green. It is that time of year again when all of these chemicals are put into beer to make it green as well. Crap, what I wouldn't do for a nice black Guinness from the tap now.

Why is it that everybody here, and for the most part around the world, find it so great an event to celebrate St. Patrick's Day? I find it very amusing that for the most part it seems to be celebrated more over here than back in Ireland. Back home there are parades, and everyone goes to mass, and then everyone sits around and sees what is on the television, and then everyone realises that national television, RTE, is lame. But over here in Canada, you can go downtown to any of the bars and find all of these drunkards drinking away saying how great it is to be Irish.

My theory is that Ireland would have been a great place to be proud of if nobody had emigrated from there. The population of the Emerald Isle is not even above four million people yet so many claim to be from there. The reason they do so is because Ireland has been spitting out people over the past hundred and fifty years. For that long period Irish people have been finding a place to live all over the planet, in Great Britain, the United States, Canada, and Australia. How many people in the Maritimes do not have ancestors from Ireland or Scotland? Now people tell me about being "proud", well if all of those folks had been proud then they would never have left little Ireland. They would have stayed put, and the country could have grown into a prosperous little nation. Instead

it is a small refuge for unemployment and backward behaviour.

One of Ireland's foremost modern poets, William McLoughlin, says it perfectly in one of his "lost nationalistic" poems, simply entitled *Irish*:

What does it mean to be Irish?

Is it to feel pride, is it to whisper stories?

Is it to drink black, is it to wear green?

Is it to chase rainbows?

Or is it to count the leaves of shamrocks?

What does it mean to be Irish?

Is it to be loathsome, is it to be killing?

Is it to be religious, is it to be drunks?

Is it to be emigrants, is it to be backward?

Is it to be us?

Ireland can be a dark, damp, depressive place where the only relief is with a lovely pint of Guinness or in trying to get a "green card" to escape to America. What moments of pride are there when walking through the noisy dismal nasty streets of Dublin, when being asked by a beggar for money at every corner? People in Ireland pretend to find focus on their achievements, no matter how little they are. The national soccer team used to be hailed as heroes, yet they never won anything. There was a special moment last summer though when Michelle Smith won three gold medals and a bronze for swimming during the Olympic Games. It was special for a brief moment as families across the country stayed up until the very early hours of the morning to see her swim. There was a great feeling of warmth and pride as she won, with watering eyes as the tricolour was raised and the national anthem was played. There was someone who was the best at what they did. How many

famous people are there who made a change in world history who were Irish?

People can tell me about Oscar Wilde, William Butler Yeats, James Joyce, Bram Stoker, or Sean O'Casey, authors and poets. People can tell me about how Ireland is the land of literature, of how more Irish people have won the Nobel Literature prize over anybody else. But what is one to be proud of? Is it to be proud of a nation that can give birth to artists, or is it to be proud of a country that only receives notice on the news here when a bomb rips

through the centre of Belfast or London, when another soldier is shot by a sniper, when the beatings continue upon the streets of Shankill Road in Belfast, or when petrol bombs light up the night sky during periods of trouble. There is the ugly face of terrorism, the heavy unemployment, politicians who sound like uneducated farmers, and the lashing of the rain, because it constantly pours from the heavens above.

The only part of Ireland I enjoy are the moments when I can slip away into the Wicklow Mountains or lay upon some stones by

a beach in Donegal, and feel nature all around me, and then I can close my eyes and dream of a better day.

To be proud of being Irish? At moments it is so hard an idea to conceive and believe. It is most ironic that when people try to think of famous Irish people they think of St. Patrick. Ireland's very own St. Patrick was, in fact, from France — he was not even Irish. When he got to Ireland the place was so barbaric that he had to convert the habitants to Christianity and chase away all the snakes.

Current DSU elections a farce

BY ERIN BETH LANGILLE

Coming off the DSU elections is like exiting a rollercoaster you didn't want to get on in the first place. You'd been riding in one of those cart-things that hadn't passed regulations in 10 years, there was some obnoxious idiot waving his hands and screaming in your face beside you, and as you taste the vomit in the back of your mouth all you can think of is how much you never want to partake in it again.

There are so many things wrong with the way the elections are run that it's hard to see the point in it at all. Voting occurs in 17 different places around the campus yet forums are only held in 4 different places, 5 if you count the SUB McInnes room and the SUB main lobby as two separate entities. As well, the envelope everyone received in the mail reporting the times, dates, and locations of all forums and voting booths didn't arrive at my house until Wednesday (after half of the forums had been held) and friends in residence never received one. I get the impression that the DSU thinks it's the job of the students to get interested and find out where the forums are and who is running on what principles. That gives candidates no reason to go out and make known their positions to the student body and shows that increasing the voter turnout by getting students interested is not a priority for the current DSU.

It is a known fact that voter participation is approximately 15 per cent of the entire Dalhousie population. If, for example, five people are running for VP Academic/External, and the candidate that won the position had 40 per cent of these votes, that would mean that approximately 6 per cent of Dalhousie students would be represented on their own terms. That is ridiculous. Given that every student provides an annual fee to the DSU budget, and the salaries of those elected come from the DSU budget, it seems to be gross misuse of the funds belonging to the 94 per cent of students that either didn't vote or didn't vote for the person that won.

This is not to mention probably the worst thing I saw during campaigning. Throughout the week I noticed the perverse amount of paper used, plastered on every wall on Dalhousie campus, but was with the assumption that it was to be recycled in the end. It wasn't until I was helping a friend take down signs that I saw every garbage can stuffed full, while some recycling containers remained relatively empty. My friend and I hunted down a custodian at the SUB to find out what was being done with the huge pile of posters and signs in the middle of the lobby. He said it would probably end up in the garbage. We took the liberty of bagging the paper and putting it besides the recycling bins but I really don't know what became of it. This

exemplifies the general bitterness towards the DSU elections by students all week. I was constantly hearing how annoying the signs were, and then the rumours spread of unethical use of election funds for the posters. It seems the excessive use of posters and signs brings nothing but negative consequences.

But there is, somewhere in the mess of it all, a point. It is smart to have a union of students, run by students, to regulate and increase standards of education, to oversee societies, teams, and functions, and to mark the university and its students in the community, nation, and around the world. As a Canadian university, not only should we be concerned with having a conductive and effective election systems, but should also want to understand why no one votes and how we can improve the voter turnout. The current election system mimics an American presidential race in terms of being a big overly expensive personality contest, in which the candidates just want to avoid scandals, and have their name and face plastered on every square inch of the campus. It is not based on the candidates' principles, ideas, hard work, experience or effort to reach out to all students.

We need leaders and representatives that can speak, who have charisma, and are personable. Impress us, not with lavish posters of airbrushed portraits and rehearsed lines thought up

cont'd on p.6: "Farce"

I KEEP COMING BACK BECAUSE...

"This church has become my family." - **Erika Ross**
3rd year Psychology

"The church reaches out to university students and we feel welcome there." - **Sarah Tate** 3rd year Psychology & **Peter Eastwood** NSCAD

"The music encourages me, and the sermons apply to my life." - **Chris Robb** 3rd year Recreation

"West End provides a family like atmosphere in which I can grow." - **Lesley Smyth** 2nd year Arts

West End United Baptist Church

Corner of Quinpool & Preston

Tel. 422-6488

Sunday Service at 11:00am & 6:30pm
College & Career, Tuesdays at 8:00pm

A growing church that cares about university students!

The Gazette is accepting nominations for the positions of: **Managing Editor**
Copy Editor
News Editor
for the 1997/98 publishing year

Nominations close Friday, March 14 at 5 p.m.

Leave statement of intent in the Gazette's front door box, room 312 of the SUB

Voting will begin Monday, March 17th at 9 a.m. and end Friday, March 21st at 5 p.m. Voting is open to all Gazette staff members, a list of whom will be posted outside the Gazette office all week.

For more information call 494-2507 and ask for Shelley.