

After a year in power

In order to provide some background for the council elections, The Dalhousie Gazette spoke with student council president Mike Power about the purpose and responsibilities of the student union. The interview was conducted by Gazette staffer Alan Adams.

Gazette: What do you think the role of a student council should be?

Power: That's rather an intriguing question primarily because I don't think many people really know what the role is and I don't pretend to have the complete answer. It's one of representation. I think a council has to be representative in the sense that it brings the varying opinions of people, around the campus, i.e. the constituents of the council representatives to council and also it takes the messages that council has about things that go on in the university and outside of it back to their constituents for an opinion. I think councillors have to do a large measure of work but this is not necessarily bad because they can develop interest areas which they can follow up. In other words, I think they have to do something but they can do what they want if they do it well and that is fine.

Gazette: How do you see the relationship between political representation and political leadership for a council member?

Power: What exactly do you mean by that?

Gazette: Political representation for the constituents versus political leadership on issues, i.e. cutbacks, tuition increases.

Power: I think it is important that in making a decision on questions that their constituents can't, primarily because they have more access to information, councillors have a very important role in providing some leadership on this campus. I think it is primarily based upon their knowledge of the system, vis-à-vis student union and its administration and the university and its administration and on the questions. Their expertise on the questions is based upon the information they receive and what they avail themselves to. They have to go out and get something. Myself, I provide what I think is absolutely necessary for a councillor to have, I put it in their mailboxes. But otherwise the stuff is out there and if it isn't out there then they can ask me for it. So I think councillors have an information role both to receive it and to give it out. Council and council meetings are the medium of exchange where we find out what people want and we can tell them what might be a good answer based upon our experiences with the system and the information we have at hand.

Gazette: Do you think council has concentrated too much of its efforts on the service end of their duties as opposed to the political end?

Power: No I don't think so. We haven't really dealt with at least this year on the service question, i.e. entertainment, or bar services. There have been a few sporadic, isolated, instances but we really haven't dealt with service orientated questions.

Gazette: Do you think Dalhousie needs an external affairs council person on its executive?

Power: No. I think the president is primarily responsible for external affairs and I think that is important. However, what I do think there should

be is some vehicle to express the student union's concern vis-à-vis academic affairs because as it stands now I am a representative on Senate and Senate Council along with the student senators. I am also sort of responsible for keeping an eye on the academic side of things here. I can't do both. I think anybody who occupies this office sort of concentrates on one or the other and I've been more interested in the academic affairs side. We have before the constitution committee a proposal for an academic affairs committee which would see the chairperson of that committee replace the vice-chairperson of Sub-Ops on the council executive. So in essence,



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I think we are sort of moving in the direction where we take the academic question off the president's back so we can concentrate more on the external end. That's my conception of the way I would like to see it go.

Gazette: Concerning that, how do you account for Dalhousie non-representation at the last two SUNS meetings?

Power: That was unfortunate but it was not intended. We had selected delegates to both those meetings. What can I say? We had picked four delegates for the last SUNS meeting at Church Point, two were tentative and two were non-councillors. It was just towards the end of the two week period before the conference the tentative ones could not make it for a variety of

reasons. Because they had mid-terms or papers due at the beginning of February and the two councillors said, "well because one of the councillors couldn't go they thought they shouldn't!" Primarily, because they would just be bodies there and wouldn't really have that much input because they had no experience with SUNS or the external aspects of cutbacks and the type of questions that are dealt with at that type of conference. I called B.J. Arsenault and explained it to him and spoke to him about 1/2 hour about topics on the agenda, and I apologized about the fact, not having the people there was unfortunate and it came up at the last minute. I remember asking him at the steering committee meeting in December if he could change the date of the meeting because I knew at that time that I couldn't go on that particular weekend.

Gazette: Did you have any goals for council this year and did you succeed in them?

Power: It is difficult to have specific goals as president and that may seem a rather blasé answer but I think the definition of what a president does in the constitution is very misleading. A president does a lot of things that even the candidates running don't know and you only learn them when you are on the job. I am disappointed with my own year for a lot of reasons, both personal and otherwise.

Gazette: What were you disappointed with during your year as president?

Power: To begin with I expected more out of councils. Not to disparage anyone on council, but I think for a variety of reasons a lot of councillors didn't put their best efforts into council. I can't apologize for that or criticize them for it because they have to make their own choice. I think it is unfortunate but I think the system is such with the right individuals in it, it will work. Personally I have had health problems which have limited my ability to serve my constituents as well as I had thought.

One final point. There has to be some tune-ups in the system because I think the constitution we have been working with, even though drastically revised last year, still has some kinks in it which has caused us some problems. The biggest problem I've had is the councillors simply haven't had the initiative they should have had. One of the reasons is that they haven't had the experience.

Gazette: Do you have any words of wisdom for your successor?

Power: Get to know the system in the summer and by that I mean the student union, the student union's operations and the university's operations. Don't develop any misconceptions about institutions in the university or student union and don't develop any personality conflicts that can't be easily resolved.

Canada in search of economic role

by Mike Burns

It is something akin to watching a play. We have seen many come forth in recent times to impress upon Canadians the need to pull together in order to face the "inevitable economic and political crises" to which Eric Kierans alluded only weeks ago. Last week, it was John Shepherd, Vice-chairman of the Science Council of Canada, whose turn it was to bear the torch. Speaking to a large audience in the Weldon Building, Shepherd chastised Canadians for being too prone to stress regional and other differences, so much so that we have projected a "boy

scout image" of ourselves to the whole world. We are like "an actor wandering aimlessly on the international stage," he pronounced. But in spite of everything, Shepherd's message was one of hope for a beleaguered "nation beyond all economic logic."

The theme of the lecture was a new economic strategy to be implemented on a national basis. The essence of such a strategy must rest, he said, on a co-ordination of regional policies rather than on a more powerful central industrial system with a massive bureaucracy. It must be truly national, and must "coalesce rather than polarize"

our wealth of resources. He said that a high degree of specialization is needed in order to contrive a new set of comparative advantages, and cited high technology, the "engine of economic growth", as the most sound means of creating such advantages. In the past, technology has been severely handicapped by the nation's geographic imbalance, the high proportion of mature industries, and by the fact that Canada, as a branch plant of the United States, has remained unable to secure an adequate spin-off effect from primary industries. He further remarked that "damaging alienation" between the manu-

facturing and natural resources sectors is a root cause of the current economic problems in the nation today. It is crucial for Canada to develop a more attractive means of rewarding innovative risk, particularly risk undertaken by the small business community. From among small businesses, he said, will eventually emerge a solid base of "core companies", whose industrial success will be the precursor of sustained Research and Development.

Having articulated several relatively new concepts, such as the formation of a Canadian Common Market, and having called into question several

relatively old ones, such as the present state of Keynesian laissez-faire, Shepherd wound down his somewhat extravagant oratory to a re-affirmation of his position that a sound economic strategy must necessarily be based on strengthened national resolve. If our business base is controlled externally, we will not be able to control our own politics (echoes of Frank Underhill). He went on, we must "fence off" our share of North America from U.S. intrusion, so that "both economic and political power will accrue North of the border."

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