

Election blues

It's been a dull campaign. Either the electorate wasn't interested enough or the politicians weren't interesting. But somehow one has the feeling that after the election things will not be any different than they were before. This is a shame.

Certainly the candidates in Halifax Cornwallis did not ignite much interest at a forum held in the Dal SUB on Tuesday. In general, the thoughtful and pointed questions by the student panel were evaded, not answered at all or answered in such a fashion as to put anyone to sleep.

Terrence Donahoe offered the platitude that his government just wanted to do the best it could. Liberal candidate Salsman failed to provide any indication of a viable alternative to the present government or any understanding of student issues for that matter. Even Michael Coyle, NDP candidate, who in the enumeration issue has shown an admirable support of student interests, appeared politically unseasoned and despite criticisms of the 'old line' parties, was vague on solutions.

What must Donahoe, Minister of Education, answer to students right now? With the impending federal cuts to post secondary education, students would like to know what he has been doing to promote Nova Scotia's case. A committee with student and university representatives was apparently set up a couple of months ago to advise policy in this regard. The committee has so far remained silent.

It is regrettable that Nova Scotia depends so heavily on federal funds, says Donahoe, and he gives us his personal commitment to promote the borrowing of funds to offset the effects of federal cutbacks.

What this commitment is worth depends on a conservative government's view of things. Donahoe's opposition to differential fees was apparently unheeded by cabinet, as were his efforts to keep tuition increases to reasonable levels. Perhaps Donahoe has done his best in a government whose priorities are elsewhere.

What policies the Liberals have in this election with respect to post secondary education are not known. The efforts of the **Gazette** to ascertain these policies from the Liberal education critic were thwarted, and Salman's presentation last Tuesday was less than illuminating. It would appear that students are not that important to the Liberals.

Given that there is no clear choice, no candidate to carry the student banner, students will have to make their choices on the broader issues facing Nova Scotians, and amongst the three parties that are asking for a mandate.

Looking at the provincial election as a whole, the only bright light on the scene is the leadership of the NDP party in Alexa McDonough. The only leader who

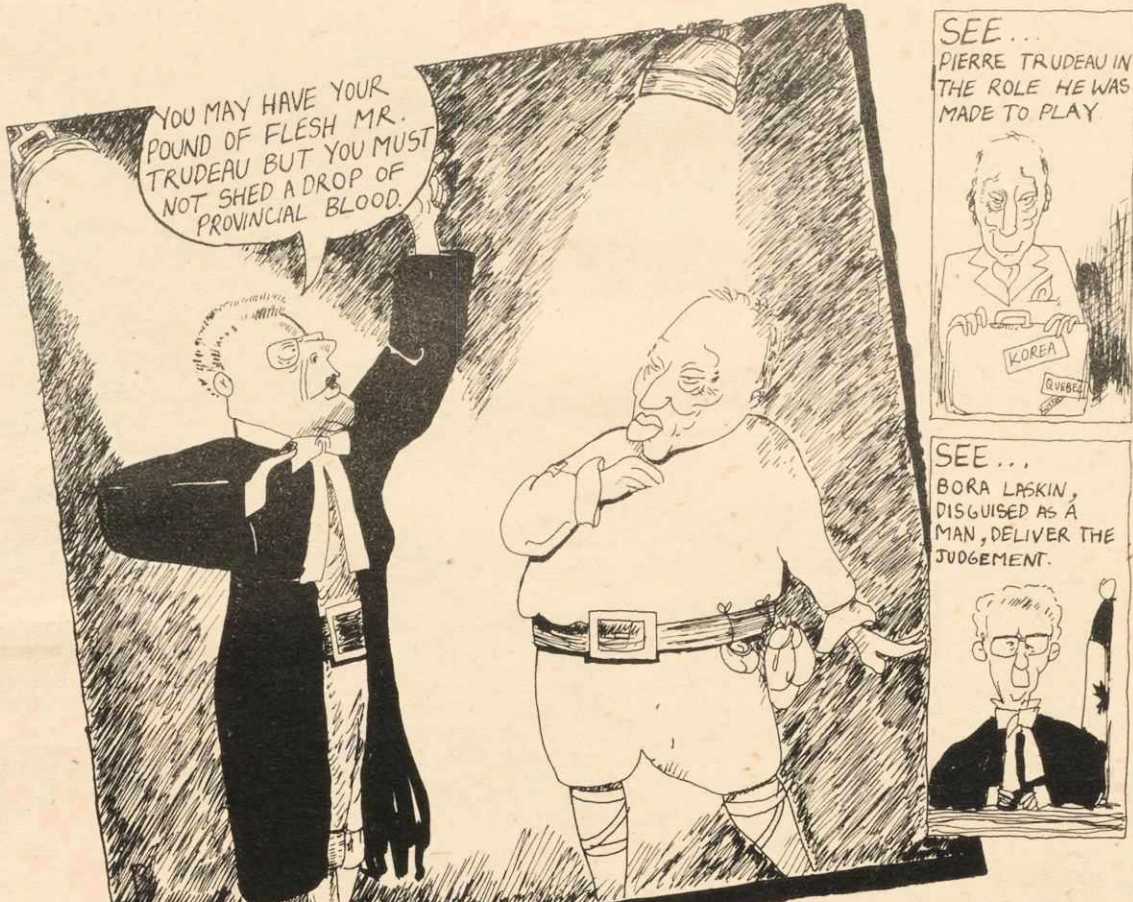
"had time" to give an interview to a member of the student press, McDonough certainly addresses issues rather than running a campaign based on "leadership" as the PC's do, or "fiscal mismanagement" from the Liberal view of things.

In light of the federal cuts, McDonough said that although she didn't have the necessary figures, an NDP government would reallocate provincial resources, with a strong element of economic planning, to give a higher priority to post secondary education. In line with the party's policy that "people are our most valuable resource", McDonough stressed that higher tuition fees must be offset, a dangerous blow to the accessibility of post secondary education.

It's easy to criticise and formulate policies without the pressures of reality, of course, but in a vacuum of choices with respect to who will best represent student concerns in the Liberals or Conservatives, the support of McDonough's party will infuse a sense that students are looking, looking for someone, something better than what we get.

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The deadline for articles and letters-to-the-editor is noon on Monday. No unsigned material will be accepted, but anonymity may be granted on request. Letters should not exceed 500 words and must be typed on a 64-character line and double spaced. Local Advertising is handled by DAL-ADS — the advertising department of Dalhousie Student Union: Tel. 424-6532. Ad copy must be submitted by the Friday preceding publication.

Our office is located on the third floor of the Dalhousie Student Union Building. Our mailing address is the Dalhousie Gazette, Dalhousie University, Halifax, N.S. You can reach us by telephone at (902) 424-2507.

The subscription rate is \$10. per year (26 issues) and our ISSN number is 0011-5819.

Co-Editors: Glenn Walton and Cathy MacDonald.

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