

Someone else rants and raves...

As a Dalhousie Student Union (DSU) Council member and a *Gazette* reporter, my urge to let students know what is going on at Dal is often a process of mitigation. I have to balance my personal opinions which are well recorded in Council minutes with the inevitable two sides of a story. However, in this case I decided to abandon this pursuit in favour of a one-sided rant. (Hey, I

have really learned something from those Joe workshops!)

The main purpose of this opinion piece is to let Dal students know they are members, through the DSU, of a new national student organization. (You are. It is called the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations (CASA).) I thought students had to find out somehow about their membership. The DSU Council voted

their membership in at the January 22 meeting.

I think it's undemocratic. I think the DSU should wait for results from a student referendum (coming to your neighbourhood in March!).

In a year that students have so much interest in, and at stake with, federal government issues, I think students should get a clear chance to voice their opinion. Not one that basically ratifies a student council decision. (I submit that the "Council" is leading the witnesses.)

Of course I should be reassured because most Council members supporting the decision talked about their role as elected representatives — you know in touch with the populace, finger on the pulse of Dal sort of thing.

Not even half of Council is generally elected in campus elections. Most are elected by societies, and well, how many of Dal's 10,000 students go to society meetings? And as a Council, we are amazed if 30 people show up for meetings and proceed with an entire meeting's business maintaining quorum.

So it seems to me that the more things change, the more they stay the same.

The "No" side of the Canadian Federation of Students (CFS) referendum and its supporters held that one of their main issues with CFS was lack of accountability and contact with students. They would rhetorically ask crowds if they knew what CFS was as proof of this. Many of these same people only weeks later voted in Council membership to CASA without making any real ef-

fort to let students know about CASA and without any effort to get students' input.

The DSU representatives who attended a CASA meeting in November knew that an inaugural meeting would take place in January. If they really respect what students say in a student referendum, one could have taken place in that time period. When I left the January 22 DSU meeting I thought maybe I was overreacting... maybe Dal students, at least those who sought to be informed, knew about CASA. However, many conversations later with

*finger on
the pulse
of Dal*

people on the executives of various societies has led to believe that not many people beyond the insular walls of the 'Second Floor of the SUB' know about CASA.

So now you know about your new membership. I am not speaking either in favour or against CASA, simply against the process. The DSU Council has made their decision about CASA. When the chance comes for Dal students to voice their opinions in March, I hope that others take their turn to vote.

As a DSU Council member I have been frustrated by the DSU's method of business this year. (And by the way I accept a certain amount of personal responsibility that students have been left out in the cold.) The

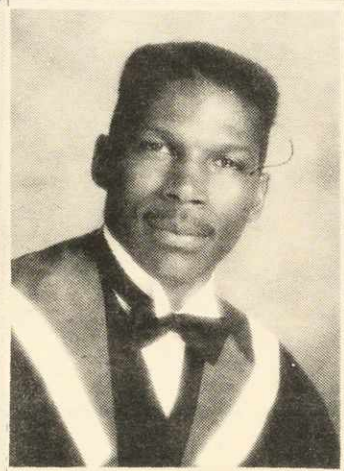
DSU Executive has gone to official meetings and spoken, without an official policy, on issues such as rationalization and Social Security Review. These policies are just being brought forth now, but most critical meetings and forums have passed. When I expressed concern over this in November I was told that I should let the Executive formulate policy. So what is my role as a Council member? To nod agreement at every Exec initiative.

The way the DSU treats dissent this year became obvious when a member who often disagreed resigned and her absence was cheered by Council and Exec members. I guess what I'm talking about is having a little bit of accountability. I feel that going and speaking on behalf of a student body without even Council policy is unaccountable.

I feel joining on behalf of its members a new national student organization is irresponsible. Student input does not even seem welcome. If I was told to mind my own business as a Council member, I wonder what the reaction is to the average student who walks in the DSU Office with a question or opinion.

And you know: I can only imagine my reception after this piece is published. Remember earlier in the year when a few students had written critical pieces about the DSU, their names and pieces were ridiculed in the DSU office. Instead of listening to the few student voices who have been able on their own initiative to become informed, the DSU seems intent on silencing them.

Lisa Lachance



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letters

**Discriminated
discriminating?**

To the editor,

I am a 42 year old gay man, who for religious and societal reasons, do not accept myself. However I agree with the young bisexual lady who complained that her straight boyfriend was not welcome at a BGLAD meeting (or similar one?). This sounds to me like ignorance and blatant discrimination on the part of gays who should have known better.

Although I do not claim to understand bisexuality (nor any kind of sexuality for that matter). I think I can appreciate her predicament — not really being accepted in the straight or the gay world. I can only say to her and to any others in a similar situation (and I suspect there are more than we think) to just try to accept yourselves and your genuine sexuality, because I believe it is genuine; that there really is bisexuality. If there's homosexuality, then why conceivably not bisexuality?

It may be unfortunate that we can't all be straight but we have to face facts and we exist and up to now, there is no 'cure.' I know this is not a popular position at present time (not politically correct as some would say) but then most of the problems of the world are not politically correct.

We do not live in an ideal world and straights are included in the mess most definitely. I also believe all races and religions are too. I also believe I am too, so don't look to me or my life as a saviour. I am an auntie Tom sell—out.

Name withheld by request

**We do not
discriminate!**

To the editor,

In response to the letter in your paper two weeks ago referring to BGLAD as being discriminatory, we, the members of BGLAD must protest that it is not our policy to discriminate against any group, including heterosexuals. The original letter to which complained about discrimination, referred to an event that occurred at the Gay & Lesbian "Youth Group" which is associated with Halifax Family Planning.

Our policy regarding the attendance of "straight people" at our meetings is as follows:

Because we do not require anyone at our meetings to identify their particular sexuality, we cannot discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation. Our one stipulation is that if you are "straight"-identified, we ask that you not tell us. It is our version of a "Don't Ask—Don't Tell Policy." If you're straight and you absolutely feel the need to attend BGLAD meetings, don't mention that you're straight while you're there.

We do however respect the rights of organizations to create "safe spaces" for the purposes of sponsoring a supportive environment where people are surrounded by those who share a common experience. We on occasion have separate Male and Female meetings for this express purpose.

If there are any questions, please feel free to call us at our office in the Dal SUB, 494-1415.

The members of BGLAD

**Some "strike"
alternatives**

To the editor,

With regards to the "student strike" on January 25 "protesting the hike in tuition," I was wondering what their alternatives were?

Are these "protestors" anticipating a government subsidized post-secondary education system, and if so, where is the money coming from? Would all of the professors currently on staff maintain their positions and current salaries, or would there be large cutbacks? If the universities stay fully staffed, how would we as Canadians afford to pay them?

Perhaps we could ask them to work for free. I'm sure that would drastically increase the level of teaching.

How about this: why doesn't each Canadian pay an additional \$3,000 in income tax to meet the salaries of these professors, so we students don't have to pay? Just think that you, over a period of fifty years, are shelling out an additional \$150,000, while some students are abusing the system, spending three or four years dicking off and wasting time.

But maybe there is a more rational idea.

Why doesn't the government subsidize it, and raise our taxes only a little bit, and then cutback on university staff and drastically raise the admission requirements so only a small percentage of us can actually attend school?

Geoff Stewart