

# COMMENTARY

## Student leaders must recognize duty

by Del Atwood

From what I've been able to glean from the past few issues of the *Gazette*, a conflict of rather substantial proportions appears to be developing between the incumbent students' union executive and Mr. Peter Rans, the graduate students' representative on council. As I'm sure almost everyone knows, it's well nigh axiomatic that these student political fracas are distressingly incessant, usually petty, and almost always passed over by an apathetic student body.

But this one is different.

It involves more than society budgets, much more than emendations to by-laws. The questions at the heart of this delightfully furious polemic are what is the proper perspective and what are the correct priorities of a responsible student government. Pretty heady stuff. Read on; it gets better.

Mr. Jeff Champion, vice-president of the students' union, has said that the object of the Dalhousie student government is 'real student con-

cerns.' Now, there is nothing immanently wrong with this statement—depending, of course, upon what is meant by 'real student concerns.' If Mr. Champion defines his expression as meaning those concerns felt by students as members of civic, provincial, national and international communities, then I should say that he is on firm ground; however, if he defines it (as Mr. Rans alleges) as meaning concerns about such topically limited matters as the SUB, the administration, SUNS, NUS, and the provincial government, then he is on less-secure footing.

The reason the former definition is probably better than the latter is that Dalhousie students—students at any post-secondary institution, for that matter—must not and cannot isolate themselves from the great expanse of social reality simply by the act of registration. Certainly, they might be able to effect a physical isolation; I know that I, myself, spend most of my waking hours immured behind the utter opaqueness of the

walls of the library. However, that is of no bearing, for the social and political interaction with the outside world—that uncharted territory beyond the boundaries of Oxford, South, Robie, and Coburg—continues. One bit of evidence of this is the delay in the commencement of work on the new rink, the result of a city council decision. There are other examples, too many to enumerate.

By way of some scholarly insight into the problem, I can recall attending a student seminar back at St. F.X. last year, whereat the guest lecturer was Dr. A.A. MacDonald, Director of the Coady International Institute. It was Dr. MacDonald's considered opinion that Canadian universities should brace themselves for hard times ahead; he based this prescience—prescience which appears to have been borne out by statistical fact—on observed public hostility toward institutions of higher learning in Canada, and an attendant disinclination to see more public funds expended on them. (This last

fact is a good thing to remember, too; that is, that we rely a good deal on the taxpayers' dollars to stay afloat.) All this, Dr. MacDonald lamented, arose from the self-centred posture of universities in relation to the communities wherein they reside. Of course, I'm sure there are sceptics who will say in refutation of the above that the public really don't give a damn one way or the other. To these people I say open your eyes; give page one of last week's *Gazette* a casual perusal. There, in stark black-and-white, are some very unsettling expressions of criticism on the subject of this university uttered by three prominent Halifax city leaders. The hostility warned of earlier is staring us in the face.

Still, the situation is not irremediable. By going the path of community involvement; by taking stands on civic, provincial, and national issues; by looking outward, instead of in, perhaps universities will one day be able to vindicate themselves in the public eye. but don't mis-

understand me. What I am suggesting is more than a self-preserving course of action; it is a duty. And it is incumbent upon all of us—individually, as well as through our students' groups, faculty associations, and administrative bodies—to effectively discharge that duty.

To initiate the process, to get us dullards on the path, directive action must be taken by those persons in authority—and that includes members of student government. Our campus leaders—both elected and appointed—must recognise their community duty and they must be faithful to it.

If, however, instead of doing their duty as prescribed above, student leaders neglect it, or, worse, deny that a duty exists, then they lay against themselves a grave indictment of irresponsibility to which there can be no defence.

I should like to state in conclusion that I do not presume to make accusations; that's up to the student body. I proffer the above as just one student's view of the proper role of student government.

### Commentary

## No reason for ID policy

by Greg Dennis

I step through the glass doors and am confronted immediately by two security guards, one standing and one sitting, wearing bright yellow T-shirts. Before an additional step may be taken into the building, I am asked gruffly to show proper identification. If I can't produce the necessary I.D., the boys will banish me from entry and turn me back the way I came in.

What is this building? CIA headquarters? Dorchester Penitentiary?

Hell, no. It's our very own Student Union Building and the guards are two of the notorious, oft slandered SUB Staff.

So what's going on here? Why can't I pop into the SUB for a coke or hamburger whenever I want? If I'm out jogging in my pocketless jock pants and sweat shirt or if my girlfriend isn't carrying her purse, we are not going to get into that building. But wait a sec. We're students, the building is for us and we pay for the right to be in it. Just what is going on here?

The blame and criticism is heaped on the unfortunate SUB staffers who are simply carrying out orders levied from somewhere in the hierarchy of SUB operations.

Some of the staffers, I know, do not like having to ask over and over again for I.D.s from people they know damn well are students. But, as the saying goes, ill fortune befalls the bearers of bad tidings and the staff will take the unwarranted abuse. They are called "the Gestapo" or are depicted as creatures from the Planet of

the Apes picking on us homo sapien students. It is true, and unfortunate, that some staffers enjoy their position of power and tend to flaunt it. However, for the most part, the staffers have to reluctantly carry out orders since they need the money to keep them in food or beer or whatever.

The blame probably lies within a policy implemented this year by the student government. "We've had problems with vandalism and theft over the last few years", says student council vice-president Jeff Champion, who oversees SUB operations. But, he adds, the heightened security this year "is not because of any particular incident" from the past; it is merely "policy".

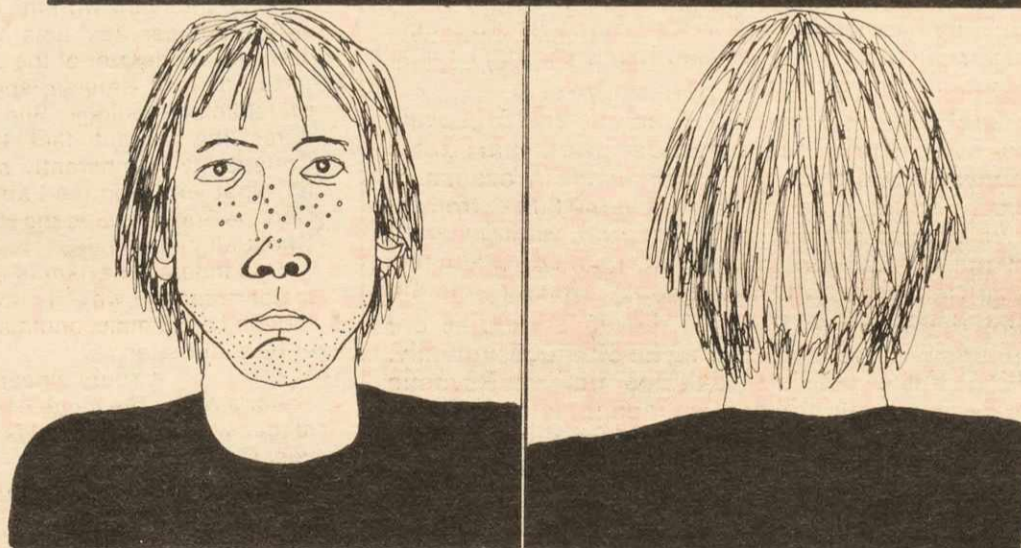
He said also it is not always the non-student who does damage to the SUB's interior. So why, I ask, do I have to show my I.D. to enter my building? "Policy," he repeats.

I don't like being asked for identification to prove I am a student. Do professors check our class approval forms before we enter the classrooms to stop a flow of people seeking a "free" education? Next, will someone be posted in the bathrooms to see that students aren't disguising themselves as members of the opposite sex to search out juicy graffiti?

These examples may be a little exaggerated but they serve a point. Does being asked for student identification to enter the student building infringe on our rights as students? Maybe, maybe not. And like it or not, the policy probably won't change.

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Elaine Thompson Dalhousie Gazette '80