

# TONIGHT

## LAMBERT AND JAMES



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## The choice between "yes" and "no"

HAVING A CHOICE IS BASIC to democracy.

A choice is not only between candidate A and B; there must be some mechanism where the electorate can vote for *neither* candidate. At Dalhousie Student Union elections, there is no such option.

To have a third alternative of voting for neither candidate is expanding that choice. A neither candidate option gives the voter the opportunity to show his or

her disapproval of the candidates running.

A neither vote is a positive way of saying 'no' rather than spoiling the ballot or not voting. If enough people disapprove of both candidates, neither is elected.

Suppose the DSU candidates for the 1986 election were two joke candidates. To a student concerned about housing he or she does not have an alternative, since both would be unlikely to

deal with the issue of housing seriously.

Under the present DSU constitution, there is no quorum for electing positions, so the spoilt ballots and 'no' votes have little effect on the outcome. If 95% of the student population intentionally spoiled the ballot or did not vote, then the election would be decided by a 5% minority, with no consideration of the majority's views.

What happens if there is only one nomination for president? The DSU constitution says the nominations should be left open until some one else does nominate him or herself. Saint Mary's recently elected president Mark Bower on a yes/no ballot since he was the only candidate. SMU's student union constitution states a candidate needs a 66% 'yes' vote of total votes cast. Clearly the 'no' option is acceptable to SMU student union, why can't it be to the DSU?

It is impractical, with present DSU constitution, to ensure that a position is contested by leaving the ballot open longer. First, it takes time, and second, there is of course still no mechanism to demonstrate disapproval of both candidates.

Of course, the DSU does believe in 'no' campaigns—for referendums. It also believes in quorums for referendums. Surely, these democratic procedures should also apply to electing positions, or does the DSU see two levels of democracy?

It is about time we said yes to 'no'.

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