

Why bother?

In an effort to avoid navel gazing, rarely does the Gazette write articles about itself. While each year's issues are invariably book-ended by rah rah "Hey! Get involved!" and "Hey! We're the new editors!" pieces, that's about all the Gazette has to say, about itself anyway. Which is a good thing. As much as putting out a paper is a world of its own, to those of us involved in it, it's not something every student wants to read about. This also means that we quietly do our jobs without ever really having to think about why we do them.

Over Christmas, four Gazette volunteers, myself included, attended a national conference on issues and policies affecting papers in the Canadian University Press. Days of seminars, budgets and constitutions, and late nights of political yammering and marathon partying were tiring. They were also exhilarating.

A week spent discussing the ins and outs of what you do at home, all year — but with new people, somewhere different — was a very Oprah Winfrey, and by that I mean validating, experience. It validated why it is we all bother putting out a paper in the first place. It's easy to forget.

Answering phones and wandering around the Student Union Building — doing necessary busywork — makes it hard to remember why you ever began. Which doesn't mean you don't care anymore, or that you stop working. You just forget the reason, exactly, that you started and — presumably — keep doing it. It becomes a habit.

I work at the Gazette because I can't imagine what I

would do if I weren't at the Gazette. I love the idea that students are doing something, putting out a paper, especially for other students. I love seeing people pick up the Gazette and read it. I love hearing people talk about things in the Gazette, or more importantly, the Gazette writing things people are talking about.

I love those things about the Gazette, but that's not why I work here. I would love those things regardless of my involvement.

I wrote this article to answer the question, "Why bother?"

Somehow "Why not?" doesn't seem a good enough answer.

Coming back from Christmas break, from this conference, made me feel like while I've always loved the Gazette, now I value it. I don't have to do anything to love the Gazette. To value it though, I must constantly strive to make it better.

Stumbling upon the reason you do some-

thing is a point of no return. Doing something is always taking a risk. It's saying that you care enough to let people know that you associate with these people, with these ideas. You care enough that if what you do fails, if what you love fails, if what you value fails, you look like a jackass. That's as true of the Gazette as it is of any group — friends, sports teams, anything you care deeply about.

Valuing something implies a commitment to being and staying involved. The reasons people become involved are not the same reasons people stay involved. Once you are involved, you represent and are represented by what you are involved in — you stay involved to make sure you are well represented. We bother because we are involved.

I bother, I stay involved with the Gazette because I love working to put out the best paper possible. I love working with other people who are working to put out the best paper possible. I love that everyone has a different idea of what the best paper possible is. I love that the Gazette is always different, depending on who values it.

SHELLEY ROBINSON



letters

Hidden Protest

Something important has been happening in Quebec over the last five weeks. So important that Conrad Black and his ilk didn't want us to know about it.

Over 60,000 students at up to 28 (out of 45) colleges called CEGEP's in Quebec went on strike against cuts to education. They occupied a number of government ministries, including the offices of the Ministry of Education and of the Treasury Board. On occasion hundreds of riot police were sent in to intimidate. Just why is this less newsworthy than Fergie?

Expressly inspired by the city-wide general strikes in Ontario, the main demands of these francophone, anglophone and allophone students are that the PQ drop a plan to cut \$700 million from education in 1997-98 and that they continue a freeze on tuition fees.

At present, and as the strike wave winds down, CEGEP students have won a partial victory: Bouchard conceded a continued tuition freeze for Quebec residents. Given this limited and discriminatory concession, CEGEP students are still angry. But their strike remained isolated by the unwillingness of most university students to join in. The action of Quebec workers, however, is now growing.

Most people in Quebec are angry about the same things that anger most people outside of Quebec: the lack of jobs, the attacks on social services, and the overall absence of democracy, equality and justice in society.

The recent unfolding of events in Quebec show the possibility of building a society based on unity instead of division, one based on meeting human need, not making profit. One of the favourite chants of the CEGEP students was, "French, English, Black, White, Together we can win this fight!"

Paula Cornwall

Political rhetoric

This is in response to Svend Robinson's recent talk at Dal about taking back Canada. While it is true the NDP is different from the traditional ruling parties in many respects, sadly, recent experiences with NDP governments in Ontario and British Columbia have shown that one pile of political rhetoric is the same as another.

The election of the NDP in Ontario was greeted with euphoria by many activists for social change. We thought things would really change, that social democracy would oust "backroom boy" politics forever. The reality was quite different. Bob Rae and his gang brought in "Rae Days", and a Social Contract which broke just about every promise the NDP had ever made. It was a betrayal which still smarts, the repercussions of which will be felt for decades to come. But it should not have been a surprise. The NDP may not be the same as those parties on the right side of the political spectrum, but it is still part of a political system which sees compromise, collusion and reformism as the means to achieve social change.

What does that mean? It means any positive change an NDP government might affect would be superficial, not substantive. It means that once in power an NDP government is just as likely to cater to corporate greed as a conservative government. It means that the politics offered by the "New" Democratic Party are old, not new.

Despite all this, I would still advocate voting for the NDP as the only reasonable alternative in a political world dominated by the right wing, who have no conscience about colluding with the corporations. At least politicians like Svend Robinson still lose sleep over the compromises they continue to make. But if it is fundamental change you are seeking, look not to the NDP.

W. Turner

the Dalhousie Gazette

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Letters may be edited for length above 300 words and we reserve the right to edit commentary.

All submissions must be typed double-spaced on paper, e-mailed, or on a Mac or IBM 3 1/2 inch disk, in a WP version not greater than Word 6.0 or equivalent. The deadline is Mondays at 4:30 p.m.

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congratulations

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