

Elections object of scientific curiosity

Civic elections — what a spectacle!

For the detached student journalist watching all the wheeling and dealing, sifting through the gabflab and non-sequiturs for underlying meaning and motives, eavesdropping on cafeteria conversations where the animals' baser instincts surface, listening to the non-stop gossip, and making predictions on the outcome based on such nebulous criteria as the height of the physical plant's smokestack on Friday 17 or the number of American tourists who found docking facilities for their cruise ships this summer, it's all very absorbing science.

Yes, science. Peering through our Gazette-o-scope and examining the motion of these shifty organisms is more marvellous than looking at DNA or the migratory route of the whooping crane. Their very contemplation is an intellectual pleasure approaching the sublime.

Of course the candidates are only part of the show. Good scientists will look beneath the surface for less visible forces: scavengers, predators, parasites, and so on. The new mayor, obviously, will have quite an effect on Halifax's ecological system and many are the creatures with niches to protect.

EDITORIAL

The Halifax Board of Trade is one such creature with a big interest in the turnout of this election. Unfortunately we don't have the experimental evidence to comment about *Corporate Giganti's* nocturnal role in the mayoralty and aldermanic races (we're begging for data from some intrepid investigative political scientist), but by day the specimen is playing a big role in the contest — perhaps a little too big.

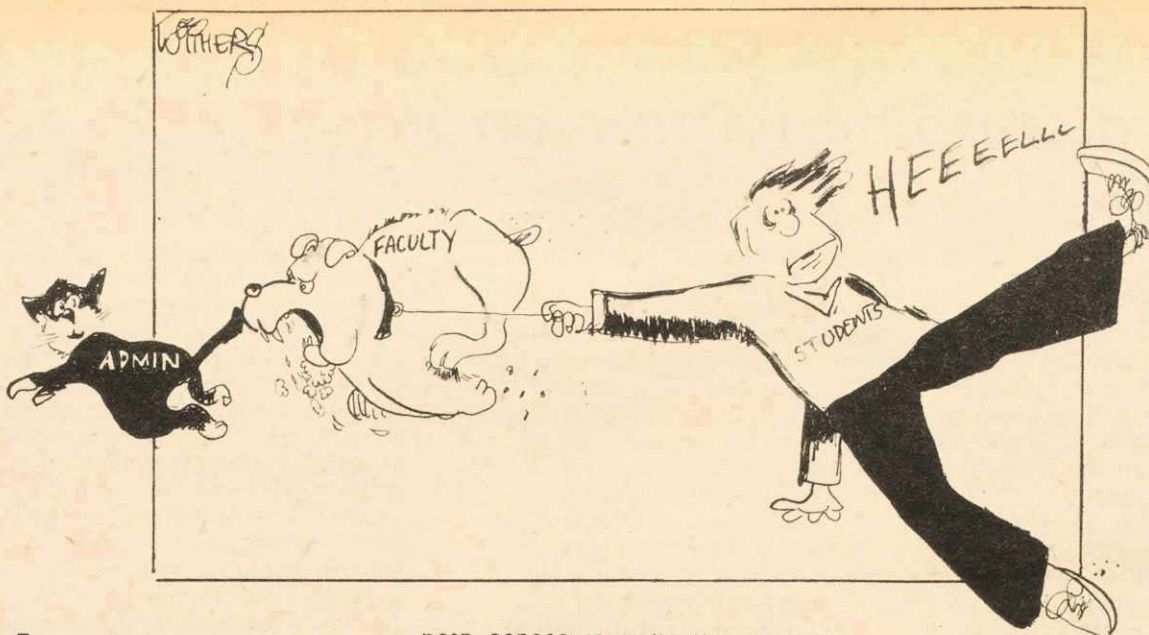
Starting Monday, October 6, each mayoralty candidate was invited to spend a day on the Board's premises (The Board of Trade Club) for question and answer sessions. In order to fully command its activities the Board formed an "Election Sub-committee." One of the Sub-committee's biggest projects was to coordinate a survey of all aldermanic and mayoralty candidates.

The most interesting thing about the question asked in the survey is how clearly they indicate the Board's interests in the candidates. There is a question which begins by informing the candidates that the commercial realty tax rate in Halifax is three times as high as the residential tax rate. Then candidates are tendentiously asked if they would like to decrease this tax rate. Candidates are asked where budgetary restraints can be placed, "so that tax increases can be substantially reduced." (No they don't follow this up with the question if it is felt substantial budgetary reduction is beneficial to all citizens or just the business community).

Candidates are further pumped with question about industrial develop (what they'll do to ensure that the Halifax Metro area remains the industrial, commercial and service centre of the Atlantic Region), providing "physical facilities" for tourism, and ways the city budget can expand without raising taxes. Conspicuous in their absence are questions about Halifax's poor, the environment, culture, streets which many Halifax women are afraid to venture out on after dark, and a plethora of other more "humanistic" questions.

Of course it is no great observation to say the Board is an interest group and they certainly have their right to get their fair share of input and output from our city's political figures. But problems arise when they get more than their fair share. The Mail Star's printing of the candidates' responses to the Board's questions, and not to Ecology Action Centre's, for example, is one indication they are controlling a little too much of the electoral driving wheel.

In conclusion, being good gamblers (we're poor scientists) we place our money where our heads, not our hearts, dictate. \$100 on the Board's choice!



Letters

Dear Sir:

Stan Kawalski's column "Preview" (*Gazette*, October 2) demands a retort. Mr. Kawalski's facile description of Truffaut's *The 400 Blows* indicates his shallow approach to that film in particular and to filmmaking in general. His glib remarks about the Sunday evening films at the Cohn ("old and boring, foreign and boring, confusing and boring") emphasize his own youth, confusion, and ignorance of the cinema and its audience. The intellectuals he mocks and the jocks and engineers he so arrogantly dismisses can grant his column only the derision it deserves.

Sincerely,
T.L. Williams
Dear editor,

It is with a heavy yet faint heart that I take pen in hand to beg your indulgence, and that of your dear, well-read readers. But all of us in the family are worried about Stanley and we wonder if you, or any other dear, kind, delightful person would please just slip him into a large box and ship him home to us.

The opinions of my brother-in-law, Mr. Stanley Kawalski, are most interesting, for a verbal primitive. At any rate my sweet sister Stella has always overlooked them, compensated, I expect, by other manifestations of his primitivism. And I have ever suffered his violent abuses, of myself as much as of my taste in films, in the patient silence with which I was taught a lady shoulders Life's Burdens. But I do not believe the general public must be subjected to the ravings of a gentleman who demonstrates the same regard for motion pictures as he does for undershirts, leaving both in shreds when he has done with them.

Stanley may be correct when he states that Mr. Kubrick's film *A Clockwork Orange* has mass appeal, "for post grads and other creatures of the library . . . deep ebbs and tides, while for the lower strata of humanity it has all the blood and tits it needs to keep a jock in his seat." This futuristic fable is both mentally and physically shocking, although Stanley's failure to appreciate that a single person is capable of responding in

both senses is indicative of his crude understanding of human nature.

He is certainly incorrect when he classes Charlie Chaplin as a "blowhead" who "created one character many sub-morons enjoy: the little tramp." Like Laurel and Hardy, Woody Allen, W.C. Fields or any of the other great comics, silent or since, Chaplin created a unique and universal persona and pitted him against the world, to the often unkind amusement of the latter. In this sense to say that "one character does not an actor make" is like saying that one million dollars does not a rich man make. Maybe not, but it makes him richer than you or me or Mr. Kawalski. Chaplin's work was not without flaws, a mawkish sentimentality being chief among them, but it withstands Stan-

ley's assault as a rock withstands a raindrop.

Correct or incorrect, the unfortunate point is that Stanley cannot comprehend that there is a world beyond his apprehension of it. He will persist in his belief that he is it, or it is he, and he can become very noisy about it. We have found reasoning with him to be unfruitful but a swift blow to the head with a wooden mallet, followed by a sedative and a hot bath, is usually effective.

Again, please accept our deepest apologies for his getting loose and running amuck in print. Stella says it is impossible, but I suspect she must have forgotten to lock the door after she fed him.

Yours charmed and sincerely,
Blanche DuBois

the Dalhousie Gazette

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