

Wrangling with the referendum

MK: My head is spinning. I have heard so much about reforming the constitution, the issues have begun to blur, the words have lost their meaning and one wonders how many people will just go to the polling station and vote according to the outcome of the coin toss they hide behind the cardboard walls. If only October 26th were Groundhog day. A furry rodent's shadow could decide for us.

JB: Yeah, like an upside-down flag almost decided a war between the inhabitants of the world's longest undefended boundary. Symbols will be the death of us. Honestly though, I will be voting No on October 26 for the very reason that the government has confused its symbols. The constitution is the document that embodies the rights and freedoms of each individual within the jurisdiction of a country. The items on the agenda of the referendum represent the special interest groups of Canada, not essential humanity. The government is using the constitution to make an emotional issue out of political problems that have been plaguing it for over twenty years. Not fair.

Who ever said justice and politics mixed? It is remarkable that a bunch of provincial political leaders got together to formulate an accord to act as a new base for Canadian law.

Speaking of justice and politics, why are we trying to have what should be legislation written into the constitution? Already the constitution is so vaguely written as to require constant reevaluation by the courts. What we are left with is law being created by lawyers, not by elected legislators. Law is being improvised, not upheld. Even given that the constitution is a living document and must be open to amendment and interpretation, this referendum isn't clarifying the situation by adding more vague considerations. The proposed amendments aren't solving anything, they just delineate problem areas. As if discord isn't obvious enough. Allowing official recognition of the problems and agreeing that something has to be done is a step, but not a constitutional step. Don't complacently assume we're advancing.

A lot of people are afraid we will never advance if this fails. We will have to go back to square one and start the whole process again, at the risk of our country falling apart in the process. This panic seems to be a result of how rushed we were to learn about the constitution and make a choice. The short time line and political pressure gave us the sense that there is no room for patience in this process. Working through each issue slowly but surely in order to form a solid philosophy for Canada's future sounds like trudging through molasses. Indeed, if problems were tackled one by one, there would be a lot of unresolved stuff left-over when Bri comes up for re-election. The big guy's business deal with the bigger guy next door will be his only contribution to the Canadian history.

Miriam Korn & Jennifer Beck

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Descent of a nation

I was a four year-old boy when I first came to Canada. I can't remember the exact moment of course, but I'd like to imagine that I sat in my mother's arms as she and my father stepped off the plane and began our new lives together in our new homeland. My parents hadn't much - just a couple of suitcases and an unending supply of hope for a better, more peaceful life to raise a family. I'm 23 now, and after growing up in a country that I have learned to love and appreciate, I can't help but feel truly disheartened by the imminent break-up and dissolution of Canada.

The constitutional wrangling that has gone on for so long seems finally close to an end. Yet it's an end we might not want. As inheritors of this nation when it enters the 21st century, are we as students doing what we can to educate ourselves on just what the upcoming referendum entails? Are we spending the time to reflect on our identity as Canadians and what we believe is the fundamental nature of the Dominion of Canada? After the delivery of a No vote, are we going to wake up as if from a dream only to discover that we have begun to live an irreversible nightmare? With the recent signing of that barbarous Free Trade Agreement between the United States, Mexico, and Canada, where do our hearts lie when the impact hits us that nothing has been left standing after the cultural, political, and social purges of Brian Mulroney and his cabinet of goons? Where will our power rest either as individuals or as a people, when in the future we wish to settle down to begin a career or raise a family, and the country we grew up in is no more?

As we are gripped in the fever of World Series mania while our country faces its worst national dilemma, does it present us with a fittingly eloquent death warrant? Just what does it mean when maple-leaf flags fly in Atlanta, when the Blue Jays win a baseball game? Or when the flag flies upside

down -inadvertently or not- on a mast held by a United States Marine?

It was 1977 when my father, my mother, and myself obtained our Canadian Citizenships. I was eight at the time, and again, the moment is lost to me, but I understand now just how significant a point that was in our lives. I can imagine that my parents were very glad, having finally been granted a welcome entry into a nation of such promise. I know that during those years, and the many that were to follow, life was not easy for them. Both willingly sacrificed an incredible amount for the well-being of their children, all the while struggling to get used to a culture that was a world away from what they had left behind forever.

They had many worrisome and frustrating moments: whether it was money problems or an unbearable climate, social barriers and discrimination, or stress and fatigue from the chores of parenthood. But they never tire in saying that it was always worth it. After surviving the adversity of living entirely in the now for the future welfare of the children, they are quite satisfied and happy now, 19 years after first arriving in Canada. Why? This is what they tell me: because now they can settle back to retire and observe the fruits of their labour - namely myself and my sister, as we develop our own lives of hope and ambition, free to do what we choose in life, free from illiteracy, free from malnutrition, free from war-torn violence, free from injustice and oppression, free from poverty, and finally, free to live our own lives, here, in Canada, in a world quite different to what could have been.

Imagine. Sometimes I think I can never show them enough gratitude. They tell me to just live and strive to be happy, to enjoy the fruits of my fortune, and by doing so that is gratitude enough. But as I look past the future of October 26, I wonder how I can.

Angel Figueroa

LETTERS

The Dalhousie Gazette welcomes letters to the editor. Letters should not exceed 300 words in length and should be typed and double-spaced. The deadline for letters is Friday noon before publication. Letters may be submitted on Mac or IBM-compatible 3.5" disk.

Shoes can't be beat

To the editor:

"Beat poet on the rise," proclaims Nike in one of their ads.

If Jack Kerouac were alive today he would be flattered by this apparent revival. The man who coined the term "beat" invented a style of writing. He broke the rules of the English language, and recorded his rambling thoughts freely, in the form of largely unedited "spontaneous prose" paragraphs and poems. He did this to protest the paralytic conformity of the institutions in our society, to speak out for the poor, and oppressed. A youthful subculture read his work in earnest.

Critics called him the spokesman of the Beat Generation. Kerouac was so strongly opposed by them that he later rejected his own term "beat". In time he became less scandalous, and increasingly accepted. The poor and non-conformists in our society have benefitted through the popularization of his work.

Today a generation born after his death in 1969 is bombarded with advertisements containing alleged "beat" poetry. This is a farce, and a cruel one. Do advertising companies think that we will not notice just because he is dead? "Beat" poetry protests the conditions found in American companies and institutions. It is also spiritual, and could never be used to sell anything. Nevertheless, it is.

Nike's "beat poet" is helping propel

a company which pays some of its workers in Indonesia \$1.03 per day, Harper's magazine reported in August. That amount, which works out to less than fourteen cents an hour, is less than the Indonesian government's figure for "minimal physical need".

Nike pays Michael Jordan \$20 million for several years of endorsements, an amount which would take one of their Asian employees, working at the pay rate shown above, 44,492 years to earn. They have proved that artistic and economic corruption can coexist within the American Dream.

Adam Newman

DAGS saga

To the editor:

From the recent coverage of the DAGS honorarium controversy in the Gazette, I find it necessary as the person in the middle of the fray to separate myth from reality.

1. The September 24th issue stated that I "officially" resigned on September 8th. In fact I announced my resignation effective immediately at the July 28th DAGS meeting. However, the "official" minutes will not show this. Why? Because they were "amended", the real minutes remain under lock and key. What is DAGS trying to hide? According to DAGS mythology I resigned at a later date so that it would appear as my resignation was based on other reasons other than the honorarium issue.

2. The comments made in the October 1st issue by Claudia Jellett are

somewhat puzzling. First, Ms. Jellett holds the appointed and paid position of DAGS administrative assistant. This requires complete neutrality. Although I understand, like any other Graduate student, Ms. Jellett is entitled as a member of the Association to voice her opinion, but it should not be done in the manner seen in the Gazette, under the guise of a DAGS representative. Obviously reality tells us that a conflict of interest exists in the case of Ms. Jellett. Secondly, she questions how I knew the outcome of votes at the March 24, 1992 honorarium meeting since I did not attend. The reality is that I asked four individuals who were at the meeting how the vote went. All the responses were the same, namely, that all honorariums but two were unanimously passed by a quorumed council. More importantly, each said they would repeat what they told me under oath if or when this issue goes to court.

3. In the most recent issue, October 8th, DAGS Councillor, Ms. Bella Niles levels some very disturbing personal accusations against my ability to conduct myself as President. However, she does not at any point enlighten your readers as to what my major shortcomings were. Why? Because there were none. I find this publicizing of a personal vendetta by Ms. Niles to be in poor taste. Following this, she lists the achievements of last year's Council. If Ms. Niles did some simple research, she would find that they were reached during the Fall and Winter terms. I resigned 3 months into my term, hardly enough time to get the ball rolling,

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