

Ex-rep rips irresponsible Student Council ...and maybe even you

Three weeks ago I resigned from student council for personal and academic reasons.

Since then I've had some time to reflect on my experiences in the glamorous, fast-paced world of student politics.

I began to think that as a final gesture of responsibility to those people who elected me, maybe I ought to share with them my so-called "informed opinion" of the student council and the problem of student apathy. Et Voila.

Let's begin by looking at a matter of current interest. How about the recent appointment of Mary-Lou Hames to my former position of Student Rep on Senate? You like? Good.

Although I don't really know Ms. Hames that well, she appears to be a nice enough person. In regards to her capability as a councillor allow me to make the following ironic statement: "I'm sure that Ms. Hames' accomplishments as Student Rep on Senate will be as vast as those that she achieved in her previous incarnation as Arts-Rep." Why is this an ironic statement? Simple. As Arts-Rep Ms. Hames really didn't do anything of much good; she didn't do anything bad. As a student councillor Ms. Hames has been a virtual non-entity. I must emphasize that I don't bear any particular grudge against Mary-Lou Hames. This is not a personal vendetta.

Hames topical-typical

Ms. Hames' recent appointment makes her rather topical; her inactivity makes her rather typical. The main point is that her lack of initiative and

leadership is typical of approximately 60 per cent of the student council. Unfortunately it is this very 60 per cent of the student council who appear cloutless and banal. How is it then that these 60 per cent get elected or appointed to sit on the council in the first place?

(In regards to appointments, a cynic might mention fraternal patronage and other sorts of favours but I won't bother. Except for this bit of course.) The answer appears to be obvious enough. Let's assume that people elect candidates to sit on representative bodies only when they perceive those bodies as carrying out some legitimate function.

viscious circle of apathy and indifference. If you join Council in an attempt to break this circle by being responsible and active, by trying to prove that Council is legitimate; Baby you're a minority. (A closer look at why this is so is coming up soon.)

Gazette et al

This vicious circle of apathy also effects other groups on campus; groups which, unlike the Council, are composed mainly of dedicated semi-responsible types. I'm referring in particular to entities such as the Gazette, SUNS, CKDU, and various societies. These groups often have trouble getting enough members to continue to

many Councillors makes them appear as harmless buffoons. the vocal activism of these other groups often results in a perception of their members as bothersome, strident, slightly weird bleeding hearts.

Yet the same weirdos have the gall to ask students to join their organization - partly so they can continue to exist - but mainly so that students can represent their own interests or viewpoints. What's the response of the average student to this call for help? "Sorry not interested."

Wisdom gleaned

This brings us (finally you're saying) to the most important bit of wisdom that I've gleaned

support can these groups effectively represent you.

My challenge to students at Dalhousie is to meet your responsibility. Go to the next meeting of your respective society. Find out if these people are genuinely interested in representing you. If they are support them. If they aren't, tell them; tell your friends and tell the Gazette. Do the same thing for the Student Council. Go to the Council meetings. Maybe even march into the Council office and ask your representative what, if anything, he/she has done for you. Have they lived up to their campaign promises (the Logans excepted, of course)? If not, impeach them. It can be done, and it can be fun.

Finally, I would like to see John Logan put an article in the Gazette explicitly outlining what each councillor has achieved in this first term. Perhaps it could take the form of a report card, ie. something along the lines of this 'hypothetical' case:

Name: Gregory F.
Position: Senate
Mark: F

Comments: Gregory entered the 'class' declaring that if something was of concern to students he'd be there. Well he's there all right. He's on more committees than you can shake a fist at. Unfortunately, he does next to nothing on these committees. He played no role whatsoever in getting the march off the ground. Gregory ought to be given a year long detention.

Remember, these are serious times,

Sincerely yours,
Martin Baker

COMMENTARY

"I used to sit on council, now I shit on Council"

Council useless?

Obviously the council lacks legitimacy for the majority of students since only 33 per cent of the student body turned out to vote in the council elections last year. A majority of people on this campus don't feel that the council performs any useful function.

Year after year the apparent inactivity and overall banality of Student Council confirms this perception. Those students that bother to vote will often discover that their representatives will happily shrug off any latent feelings of responsibility and refrain from any serious attempts to legitimize their existence on Council.

Viscious circles

What we have here is a

survive. Perhaps its because they don't hold out the promise of prestige and glamour with a minimal amount of work often associated with Student Council. For some Council is merely a cynical means to an end. That end being a mention on a resume. Let's face it, these groups demand a certain amount of work and hell, you don't even get your picture up in the SUB. (Time for an incidental comment. By making minimal use of the Gazette as a forum for debate, Councillors aren't helping anyone; not themselves, not the Gazette, and certainly not the student body.)

Harmless buffoons vs. strident weirdos

Whereas the inactivity of

from my brief experience as a Councillor.

Political responsibility is a two way street and political apathy exists because we all allow it to exist.

Allow me to explain. (God, here he goes again. Doesn't the man stop?)

Many of you indicated your concern over these matters by joining the march of September 30. However, the responsibility didn't end when the march finished.

Student Council, SUNS, and CFS exist in large part to ensure that we as students have a say in the future shape of post secondary education here at Dalhousie, throughout the province, and across the country.

Only through your active

A look at day care in N.S.

by Heather Roseveare

The federal NDP has accused the government of making day care an area for cutbacks, in reassuring its current funding of day care on a 50-50 basis with the provinces.

The Gazette has taken a closer look at how day care service is operated here in Nova Scotia.

"Day care should be the right of every child, regardless of its age or the marital or economic status of its parents." This was a platform in NDP Michael Coyle's provincial election campaign this fall, when contesting the Halifax Cornwallis riding.

In response to Coyle's challenge to make day care equally accessible to all, referring to the waiting lists of families trying to enrol their children in Halifax facilities, the provincial Director of Day Care Services argued that "this is a free enterprise province". Elizabeth Bisset-Sagar said her department

would rather educate people as to how to set up a day care operation, rather than placing the initiative on the government to create new centres.

Day care in Nova Scotia has been under the direction of the Department of Social Services since 1967 when there was felt to be a need to standardize and overlook day care operations in this province. Licensing requirements were initiated under the Day Nurseries Act, supplemented by the Day Care Services Act of 1971, and today are administered according to the Day Care Act of 1980.

"Licensing requirements are established in the interest of the children served," according to Bisset-Hagar. Day care facilities must meet standards set by the Provincial Fire Marshall and the Department of Health. They must present a daily program that stimulates intellectual, physical, emotional, and social development, and have at least 30 square feet of unobstructed playroom space for each child.

Although all day care centres

in Nova Scotia have to be licensed, some go one step further and become registered centres, which entitles families to government financial assistance. As of November 1, 1981, a one-parent family with four children and an annual income of \$12,500 only pays a nominal rate of \$1.00 per day, while the rest is government-subsidized up to \$9.65 per day. The amount a family pays for day care increases as income increases, and subsidies are terminated once the family's net income reaches \$15,900. The federal government, under the provisions of the Canada Assistance Plan, cost-shares the subsidies with the provincial government on a 50-50 basis.

Bisset-Hagar says subsidies are necessary as "some families' survival depends on the working mother's job". Victoria Byrne, mother of two children, has never applied for government assistance. She feels "not everyone needs it" although she admits putting her children in day care "has been very

expensive".

The licensing requirement of one toilet per ten children is what recently prevented the South End Day Care Centre from temporarily adjoining itself to the Dalhousie Day Care Centre. As the Dal Day Care already had sixty children to seven toilets, they could not accommodate the South End's forty children. Ginette Purcer, director of Dal Day Care, says the centre was able to accommodate five children, all of whom were children of Dalhousie staff or faculty.

Victoria Byrne has put her children in day care centres for six years. She feels the rooms are often "too small in relation to the size of the children" and that playroom areas are often "too open". Although Byrne realizes day care centres don't have a lot of money for decor, she feels her children have been cared for in plain, dull settings.

Nutrition is a concern of day care centres and provincial nutritionists are available to help centres plan meals and snacks.

Healthy eating increases the child's nutritional awareness, explains Bisset-Hagar, and food "can be used to explore colours and texture."

In 1976, the Departments of Social Services and Education launched a program of training for personnel in day care operations. The Nova Scotia Teacher's College in Truro offers a two-year diploma in Child Development Services Associate (CDSA). Two-week summer programs and regional workshops also serve to educate day care workers. Bisset-Hagar says this education is necessary to give workers "some indication of how to provide a day care program".

Day care facilities with adequate resources serve handicapped children; however, there has not been a great demand for day care for these children. Peggy Gorman, worker at the Wee Care Developmental Centre for Physically Disabled Children in Halifax, reports that only five of sixteen spaces are filled by disabled children.