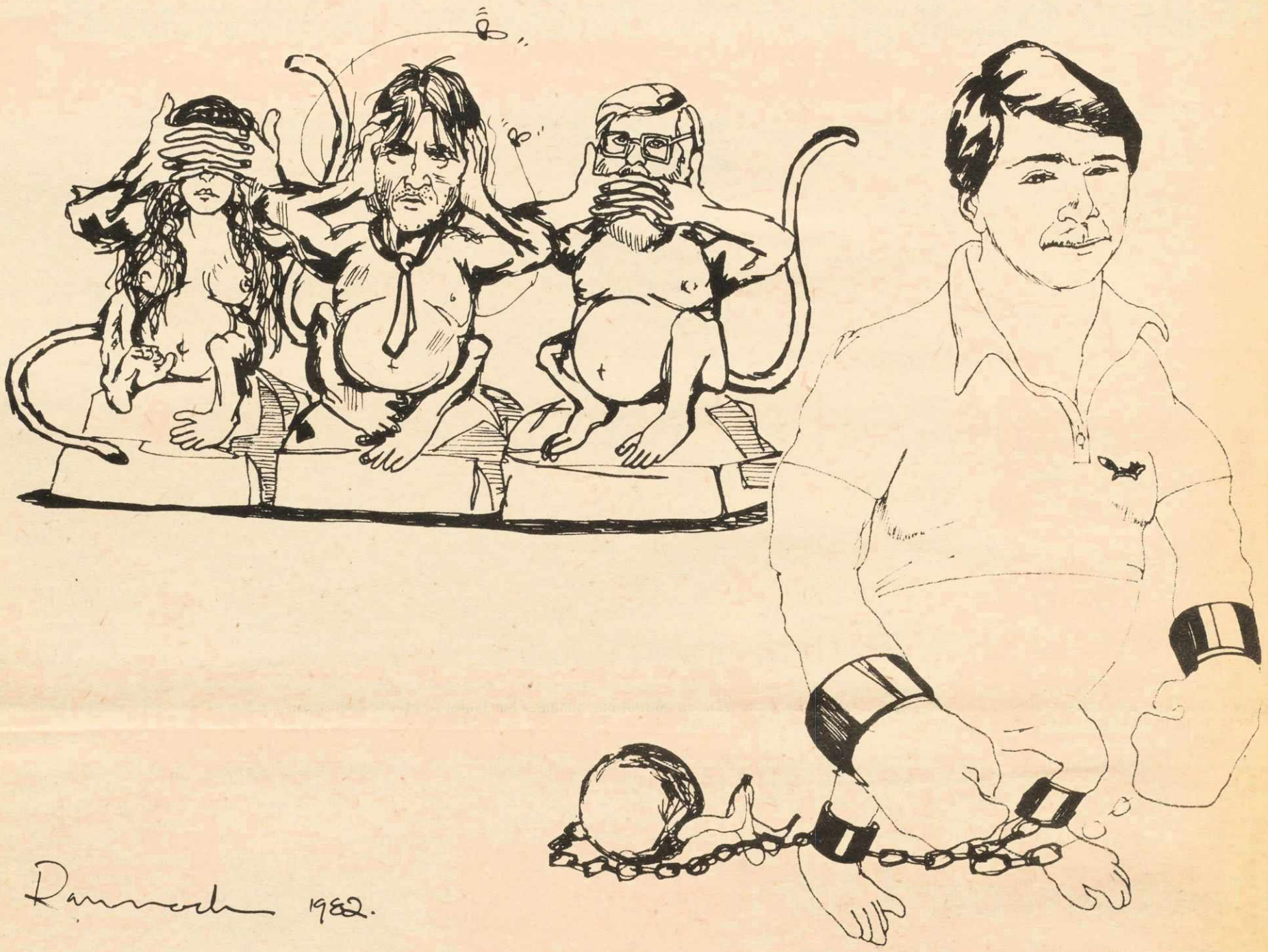
Editorial

SPITOONS, etc.



Open or closed?

Greg Fitzgerald's letter of resignaton has given Council yet another problem to consider.

If they accept his resignation, it is possible that nothing will be entered in the Council minutes as to his guilt or innocence in the AIESEC embezzlement. If he is guilty, this will effectively allow him to escape from the situation with no permanent blot on his record. This, of course, would be preferable to Fitzgerald if he has any future political ambitions.

However, the only way for the truth of the matter to come out is to continue the impeachment proceedings. His resignation should not be accepted.

With this motion coming up before Sunday's Council meeting, the 1982-83 version of Dal Student Council has a chance to show us what they're made of.

If Council chooses to vote for a closed meeting during the Fitzgerald debate, it'll prove that this year's Council is as concerned about covering its tail as last year's was. The precedent will have been set (once more) for embarrassing matters involving council, or council insiders, to be handled in secret, away from any outside critical eye.

The only reason for the impeachment notice to be discussed in private is if there's any doubt as to whether Fitzgerald took $860 from AIESEC. If AIESEC has proof of that, and Fitzgerald doesn't deny the fact (he did pay AIESEC $860 this summer), then it's not a question of protecting someone's innocence. It's a question of Council not wanting to show the general populace its dirty underwear.

It's been suggested that, in such a discussion, Fitzgerald could be slanderously accused of something he's innocent of. But council cannot worry about potential libel coming up in the meetings - something slanderous is said at practically every session. What is important is that council establish some moral credibility - something last year's Council trampled all over in its dealings with similar affairs.

On two separate occasions, people who had embezzled and/or forged cheques (for tidy sums of money) escaped without charges being laid or even a serviceable reprimand. This happened, of course, after the meeting had been closed to all non-councillors. And in both cases, the guilt of the offender was never in question. The meeting was closed due to the "sensitive" nature of the matter.

Well, if council takes that particular excuse this time, students have good reason to be upset. Students' money is at stake here. I'm not suggesting that the outcome of the impeachment vote would be any different than if the meeting was open, but it's not an honourable way for a supposedly open and democratic council to behave.

Before the idea of a closed meeting is even brought up, Council should look long and hard at the evidence against Greg Fitzgerald. They should be bending over backwards to keep it open, not close the meeting off.

But with Fitzgerald's notice of resignation, the matter is complicated somewhat. His resignation should not be accepted and the motion of impeachment should stand.

Gazette Staff Meeting

this (and every) Thursday at 8:00.

G'wan, try it.