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First, I'd like a clearly stated summary of your stand on censorship. Your latest editorial gave the classic "freedom of speech and expression" bit, defending your right to say what you want without anyone telling you what you can or can't say. Well, that sounds reasonable. Elsewhere, however, the *Gazette* "reserves the right to refuse any material of a libelous, sexist, racist or homophobic nature." Now, that also sounds reasonable. But a recent major victory against censorship involved the right of a library to keep an example of hate literature on its shelves. I can't help but think that the *Gazette* is saying, "We are against being censored, but we are in favor of censoring." Your reply?

Second: What is the *Gazette's* stand on pacifism and violence? You generally seem to be on the pacifists' side, as witness Ken Burke's article about American nukes in Canadian waters. I can't reconcile this image, though, with that presented by the offensive terrorist b.s. cartoons you published. Only hypocrites and psychotics would suggest that one kind of killing is bad and one kind of killing is good. The corpses don't care whether they were killed by filthy imperialist fascist (or communist) nuclear weapons or by brave concerned freedom fighters vigorously opposing nuclear war by courageously blowing up factory workers who work for the wrong company. It's a matter of degree, not of kind. Anyway, that's how I see it. What's your side?

I hope I find some serious, intelligent response in the *Gazette* soon. After all, you're supposed to represent us, the students of Dalhousie, not just yourselves.

Steven Roby

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"Heads-up-their-arse types"?

To the editors,

In the Oct. 11 edition of *The Gazette*, the editors tell us "if voting changed anything they'd make it illegal." They then proceed to try and convince us that we don't live in a democratic country. The reason we live in a non-democratic country is that the government elected by the people in free elections refuses to bow to the demands of a small minority. This small minority, according to the editors, is justified in using violence to force their will on the majority.

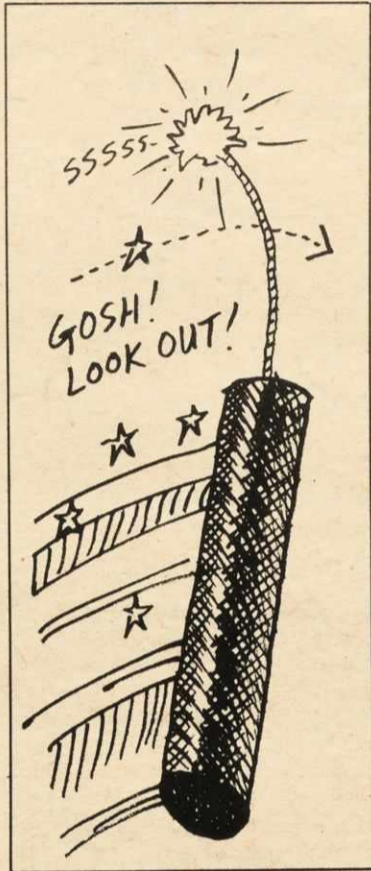
This week *The Gazette* editors tell us, "There is no room for violence in Canadian politics." Strange, just last week political violence in Canada was all right. The editors believe it is all right for Direct Action to firebomb a store that rents videos that they feel promote violence; yet they feel it is wrong for a person at Dalhousie to attack what he sees as advocating violence.

These are examples of the double standard with which the *Gazette* editors view the world. Democracy is all right as long as it allows what

they believe in. If it doesn't accept these beliefs then it isn't democracy, so violence is acceptable. Violence is all right when it is used to attack those persons or ideas they oppose but there is no room for it when it is used against ideas and people they like.

Finally if the *Gazette* editors are tired of being around "heads-up-their-arse types" they should leave their offices more often.

Ken MacAulay



Direct Action mad bombers of Canada

To the editors,

"Violence is an abhorrent way to resolve political conflict." With that lead Rick Janson, *Gazette* staff member and self-styled social visionary introduced an argument in support of the mad bombers of Canada, Direct Action. (Violence and social change)

Many illconceived arguments and writings have graced the pages of the *Gazette*. Such is the standard of journalism that students of Dalhousie have come to expect from the collection of naïve idealists that constitute a large part of its staff. Mr. Janson's article of last week cannot pass without comment, however.

Let me point out to the reader that there are some points on which I'm in agreement with Mr. Janson. I also believe that violence in political conflict is abhorrent. I also believe we live in an imperfect world. In regards to the latter one needs only be made aware of the news to be reminded of the faults and follies of mankind. But from here I must depart from Mr. Janson's fantasy island and argue that Direct Action is not, as he would have us believe, a laudable group.

Certainly people face dilemmas in coming to grips with a government that acts against their wishes or interests. To borrow examples Mr. Janson used we can consider the African National Congress

(ANC) and opposition to the arms race as manifested by Direct Action.

What about the ANC? To compare the plight of blacks in South Africa with Canadians opposed to the arms race and cruise missile testing in specific is an ignorant, infantile attempt at clouding the issue. It is also a profound insult to the blacks of South Africa who desire political rights, any political rights. Perhaps some facts are called for, facts that Mr. Janson seemed to ignore in a fashion that was rather convenient for his article.

Fact: blacks in South Africa constitute an overwhelming majority of the population. Fact: blacks in South Africa are denied what we consider to be basic political rights. These rights include the right to assembly, freedom of speech which allows for criticism of the government and, more significant than the multitude of others, the right to vote.

What about Canada? Fact: all Canadians, 18 or over with the exception of a tiny minority (inmates in prison as an example) have the right to vote. Fact: Canadians enjoy freedom of speech and freedom of assembly. In Canada you can join a political party or form a new one, sign a petition or march in a demonstration. In short Canadians have a plethora of potential outlets for political thought or action.

But what about the cruise missile? Canada is testing the cruise as part of its collective defence agreements and this is an aspect of government policy which many do not care for. As indicated, however, those who oppose have a multitude of means with which to voice their opposition and try to alter the state of affairs.

The fact that cruise missile testing was not a major issue in the recent federal election makes a mockery of Mr. Janson's claim that in testing the cruise the collective will of the people is being ignored. Even opinion polls have shown Canadians fairly divided on the subject. Yet Direct Action chose the route of terror.

The activities of Direct Action, a collection of common criminals at least, enemies in an undeclared war at most, could have resulted in the deaths of many innocent people. All of that because they were impatient with the political process. All of that because they had the arrogance to presume that theirs and theirs alone was the just cause.

Were the *Gazette* staffed by children their naïvete might amuse. Unfortunately Mr. Janson and his crew are all adults, more ignorant than naïve. Perhaps if some thought were allowed to pierce the rhetoric of trendy causes the *Gazette* might begin to appreciate what Paul Davis pointed out, that by endorsing violence the *Gazette* leaves itself open as a target.

If it were possible to glean any lesson of value from the *Gazette* it is probably only this. Mr. Janson's writing and other similar articles prove one thing very clearly. In fact one could even say that such work is symptomatic of the fact that the real threat of violence in our society comes from the left, not the right.

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Ferraro and the monolithic press

By RICK JANSON

When the press hates you it sure is tough to get a point across. Witness U.S. vice-presidential candidate Geraldine Ferraro.

Early in the election campaign Ferraro endured a series of probes into her financial affairs and those of her husband. There were hints of mob links made in the press although nothing could be proven. Her personal defense pre-empted any kind of headline her actual politics could have made.

Last week they were back at it again. When Ferraro was trying to score political points attacking the Reagan foreign policy, the press was playing up the fact that her parents were arrested in the 1940's on gambling charges.

Now, taken in a cold, analytical light, what does the fact that her parents were arrested over four decades ago on gambling charges have to do with the politics of the moment? The answer: nothing.

It is naïve to suggest the press may be inadvertently sidetracked on this issue. It is clear that important issues that may be embarrassing to the Reagan administration are being sidetracked by a press that in this election is showing its biases more openly than recent memory allows.

The irony behind it all is that the North American press is one of the last vestiges of supposed "objective" journalism. While the boys club of the American press tears apart the first woman vice-presidential candidate in that country's history, they posture themselves as if they are presenting facts—straight and objective.

But how objective are they, and how objective can you be when covering something like a presidential debate, for example?

Debates have winners and losers, but determining which is which is always a subjective response. Not choosing a winner and loser in an era of image politics amounts to ignoring the story. Although reporters can try their hardest to be fair, being objective is just plain impossible. It suggests that after years of covering their particular beat, reporters would have absolutely no opinions about it. The American press does have a bias, and in this campaign it is decidedly Republican.

Now the problem does not so much lie in the fact that the press is biased, but in the fact that it is uniformly biased.

Part of the reason for the uniformity lies in the way institutions allow access to public figures. In American politics, the White House

is allowed to pick and choose not only the reporters who will cover the president, but approve the questions to be asked during the presidential press conferences. When the president steps before the television cameras we get the impression he is walking into a lion's den of press reporters. In reality he is walking into a very controlled environment with prepared answers to previously screened questions. It is the president that sets the agenda, not the press or the people.

Another reason for uniformity lies in the economies of putting out a newspaper. Many smaller newspapers rely on wire services for much of their important national and international news. Wire services, like any other news source, come with their own inherent set of biases faithfully run in newspapers across the continent.

Perhaps one of the prime reasons lie in the media monopolies that have drastically reduced the number of newspapers in North America (and abroad). Each time a newspaper dies, so does another voice, another opinion. In North America, because of the objectivity myth, it is a less evident loss to newspaper readers. If news stories are objective, what difference does it make if another paper goes under? But news stories are not objective, and the losses are important.

A francophone colleague in the student press once remarked that she didn't like the way the English-language press covered the news. She called it "dishonest" because it had biases, like the Francophone media, but was written in such a manner that conveyed objectivity.

The deception, the dishonesty, has come full circle and has harmed society by creating publics that less and less question their sources of information.

The end result is that we very much have one press now. It is not as monolithic as the Soviet press, but it does have a similar limited spectrum of political thought.

In a free and open society we need as many avenues open for varying opinion as possible. If we have a monolithic press, we end up with a politically monolithic society. In the Soviet Union the press is controlled by the government. Here it is controlled by large capitalist conglomerates. Same difference? Almost.

When the press uniformly focuses in on Ferraro's obscure and irrelevant past, one has to question whether a democracy truly exists any more or whether the manipulation of publics by politicians and the press has taken away any real elements of a free society with real choices. □