

# COUNCIL DEBATES GAZETTE POLICY

## Takes No Action After Discussion Of Letter

The Students' Council, at its Sunday meeting, decided to let the question of the *Gazette's* publication of a letter about Athletic Coach Al Thomas "go by," and took no further action. The publication of the letter raised a storm of controversy on the campus, evidenced in part by the letters received by the editor and printed on this page.

Ken Mounce, Council President, raised the question at the request of several students who felt that the paper should not have printed the letter. Censure of the editor had been mentioned by some of them.

The editor said that it had long been *Gazette* policy to publish all letters received from students that were not plainly libelous, and that it was also policy to withhold the writer's name of this was requested. The letter, printed last week under the heading "A very interesting letter to the editor from an unhappy student," was signed when received at the *Gazette* office, he stated, but there was a request to withhold the name attached.

The editor said he felt he was completely within his rights in both publishing the letter and withholding the name. All council members seemed to agree with his position, but some questioned his discretion in allowing the letter in question to appear. "Discretion is a personal matter," said the editor, "and no policy on how to be discreet should be laid down by the Council. Personally, I do not feel my action showed lack of discretion. This is a matter of opinion, and, like all opinions, debatable."

After discussion lasting nearly half an hour, the Council members decided not to take any official action on the matter. Several members had expressed their agreement with the editor, while others felt that their suggestions to him should not take the form of a resolution but should be valued as the personal opinions of the members.

The editor said that the writer of the letter in question had agreed to allow his name to be published in the next issue of the paper.

He also said that he had telephoned Coach Thomas and explained again that publication of the letter certainly did not imply endorsement of its contents. He apologized for any personal misunderstanding that might have arisen. The coach, it was pointed out by a Council member, is an employee of the university and not a faculty member.

### I DID IT!

Halifax, N. S.  
Dec. 1, 1956.

Dear Sirs:

As the author of last week's letter to the editor, I am aware that in withholding my name I have left myself open to criticism. I realize my mistake and I readily admit it.

There is one point I would like to make, however. The criticism which has been levelled at me and which has been levelled wrongly at the *Gazette* does not appear to be concerned with the contents of my letter but rather with the manner in which it was presented. Therefore I would like to apologize for the manner in which my last letter was presented. I certainly do not apologize for the content of my letter. I shall be genuinely surprised if there is much said against my criticism of Coach Thomas.

Sincerely,  
Danny Jacobson.

### How To Increase Your Word Power

Mr. Editor:

Upon perusing the scurrilous epistle which was fabricated by the poisoned pen of over-zealous, libelous, churlish scribe, we have arrived at the nauseating conclusion that although in the athletic department there may be area for some CONSTRUCTIVE AND POLITE criticism, the aforesaid individual was by no means justified in writing the deplorable and disgusting lampoons which were published in the *Gazette* issue of November 29.

Sincerely,  
(Signed) Martin Fransworth,  
assisted by Sam.



## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### DAAC Statement

Dear Editor:

I would like to direct a few comments to the "unhappy student" whose letter appeared in the last issue of the *Gazette*. What he wished to accomplish by such a personal tirade I'm sure I don't know. If he has some personal animosity towards our physical director I hardly think that giving it expression on the pages of the *Gazette* was a very mature thing to do.

Nor, Mr. Editor, do I think that publishing letters which border upon defamation is a very wise practice. The only result can be ill feeling. Besides, isn't that encroaching somewhat on *Flash's* jurisdiction?

The statement that Al Thomas doesn't get along with his players and the student body as a whole would hardly find support amongst those who have worked with and under Al for the past few years. Similarly vague reference to "a failure of the DAAC to improve its performance" and a disharmony in the athletic department rousing athletic misfortunes need considerable qualification in the light of the sharp increase in inter-faculty participation, and number of sports engaged in by Dalhousie athletes over the past few years.

Let's hear some honest criticism which is truly constructive, and on a mature level.

Yours truly,  
(Sgd.) Garry Watson,  
President, DAAC.

### ...policy questionable...

Mr. Editor:

Freedom of the press without responsibility. The Dalhousie *Gazette* and its Editorial Staff has certainly gone a long way in an attempt to set this hypocritical norm. Last week's letter to the Editor concerning the status of the D.A.A.C. and the Athletic Department was, in substance, childish, premature and unworthy of reply. However, the Editorial policy which enabled this letter to be printed is questionable.

In the past censorship has rested with the Editor. Such unwarranted abuse may necessitate its removal to a higher and more responsible authority.

In such instances there are four courses open to the Student Editor:

- (1) inform the person criticized of the content and general tone of the letter,
- (2) Require the author to present his criticism rationally,
- (3) refuse to print the letter,
- (4) reprint the letter.

The last mentioned was the course chosen. It was the least worthy of the assumed integrity of the Editor.

Every student has the right to express his or her opinion. However, opinion may be criticism but it is never invective. A student publication should never descend to personalities when speaking of

a member of the Faculty. Face-tious tongue-in-cheek apology does not exonerate the Editor nor justify his policy. Sensationalism must never be achieved at the expense of a member of the Faculty.  
(signed) Pat McDonald,  
2nd Year Law.

### ...audaciousness...

November 30, 1956  
Halifax, Nova Scotia

Mr. Editor,

Although I am not prone to the writing in reply of newspaper articles I felt that the audaciousness contained in the "Letter to the Editor" in the November 29 issue of the *Gazette* was most unbecoming of a university student.

To begin with I am attempting neither to defend nor criticize Mr. Al Thomas. I feel, as a student, is leaves me with little or no qualification to do so. I do, however, wish to comment on this previously mentioned letter. As the writer of this piece remains anonymous I shall refer to him or her as Mr. X.

Mr. X states "failure of the D.A.A.C. to improve its performance . . . can be traced directly to one person", namely Mr. Thomas. It might interest Mr. X to know that the D.A.A.C. is an organization with membership of approximately one thousand men students of Dalhousie University, and if this organization is such a failure as he suggests, does it not seem logical the fault lies with all these men, not just one. In the only meeting held so far this year by the D.A.A.C. a mere 60 heads made their presence known. You don't mean to say Mr. Thomas scared everyone else away?

Mr. X also refers to the last football season as "disastrous". What is disastrous about a team, who, although out-conditioned and out-experienced during a greater part of the season, never stopped trying and gave the Purdy Cup champions as hard a time in the playoffs as any one else. Sure Mr. Thomas made mistakes, but so did the players who fumbled at crucial moments, or missed a key block. To them we say tough luck. Then we turn around and blame the next person we find who happens to be the coach. He didn't fumble or miss the block.

Mr. X in conclusion has the audacity to offer his so-called "constructive criticism". If this is what he calls constructive he belongs in an institution all right, but not Dalhousie.

If there are others such as Mr. X who are not satisfied with the operations of the athletic setup then let them unite and organize their ideas for improvement into helpful suggestions and present them to the athletic department. I'm sure Mr. Thomas is not prone to well presented suggestions from a person or group of persons if it will further the effectiveness of his department, but as to the form which Mr. X has submitted I say —PHOOEY.

I remain,  
(signed) Don Wood.

### ...unethical action...

November 30, 1956

"Letters to the Editor" Column, Dalhousie *Gazette*, Halifax, N. S.

Dear Mr. Editor,

"A Very Interesting Letter to the Editor from an Unhappy Student", as the caption of November 29, 1956 describes it, left a very disagreeable taste in the mouths of the undersigned. We wish to express our disappointment over the *Gazette's* publication of this letter.

Mr. Editor, we are not concerned with Mr. Thomas's coaching ability except to say there are two sides to every story and our friend's letter proved nothing to us. What we are concerned with is the unethical action of publishing a letter which criticises one individual publicly while allowing the critic to hide behind the veil of anonymity.

In the final analysis you, by publishing a letter in your paper, must bear the bulk of the blame. Your desire to stir up student interest is admirable but your tactics are deplorable. Freedom of the press is one thing but the right of an accused to have his accuser's name known is another. By publishing the letter and withholding the writer's name you have exercised the former so that it is no longer a right but a license, and, at the same time, have disregarded the right of an individual.

To you Mr. Editor, we suggest that you adopt a policy of requiring those letters, which seek to criticise a specific individual, to be signed before publication. Those who have not the gumption to sign their names, having raked an individual over the coals, ought not have their views aired.

To you unhappy Student—there may be some who disagree with you. Why not give them a chance to direct their dissent to you as an individual as you so successfully have given any of your supporters opportunity to centre their attack against Mr. Thomas.

Yours sincerely,  
(sgd.) William W. Marshall  
D. Lewis Matheson

### ..paper...pathetic..

November 30, 1956

Dear Editor:

What is happening to the Dalhousie *Gazette*, Canada's Oldest College Newspaper? That is the question that is being asked by the more sensible students at Dal. The paper this year has been pathetic, in particular the last issue!

I have seen better published by High School students. The November 29 issue certainly does not come up to the majority I have mentioned as the majority of the paper is an insult to the intelligence of University students.

The Masthead mentions that the students have regretted having a paper since 1869. I do not know whether this has always been the case but certainly there are a few students who regret having it in  
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