

Editorial

Dentists number two, but do they try harder?

Whether you are the Montreal Expos or the vice-president of the United States, being number two means a whole lot less fanfare than being number one.

For the last several years dentists have had the second greatest average income of any profession, better than lawyers or engineers or accountants or professors. In dollars that amounts to about \$43,000 a year. But it is the medical profession which has been number one (doctors salaries average over \$50,000 a year) and taken all the abuse.

A recent article in MacLean's (Doctors in Crisis, Sept. 29, 1980) says doctors are likely to be seen as "hard-drinking money-grubbers with inflexibility conservative social attitudes and low golf handicaps. They no longer visit you; you visit them — even if it means waiting in line like a customer in a butcher's shop. Besides that, they often seem to care more about their own financial health than your piffling illness. Medical practitioners are criticized for abandoning their old image of a "friendly selfless family doctor, toting a black bag full of bottles and tubes." Statistics and studies are cited showing medical practitioners suffer from "high living, drug abuse and alcoholism," as well as "workaholicism." They are further attacked for elitist attitudes and wielding disproportionate political power which advances the selfish claim of some of them that "they should be paid like baseball players."

Dalhousie dentists are pulling
in huge salaries for services
many students can't afford

Dentists, on the other hand, go about their meery way without this kind of flak. Their profession — working in someone's mouth all day long — is perceived to be an unpleasant one for all but the most sadistic users of needles and drill. We tend to view them as friendly and dutiful tooth healers, not as owners of big houses, cars and lawn chairs on Bermuda beaches. The RCMP investigation of Dalhousie's faculty of dentistry should put us on the alert, however.

Two oral surgeons there, Dr. Precious and Dr. Lovely (these are their real names, not sarcastic pseudonyms), are making incomes well in excess of \$200,000. Precious is pulling in \$140,000 from a lucrative private practice, \$75,000 from clinical practice at the VG and, on top of that, receives a \$40,000 salary at Dalhousie. All these goodies make for an accumulated income of \$255,000. Lovely's salaries are even more swollen, tabling him a fat \$277,000 annually.

Pulling these dentists' salaries out of Revenue Canada's closet into the public limelight is intended to do more than just highlight the inequities of Canadian society. Further, these figures shouldn't be used just to point a finger at dentists and complain about what a greedy bunch they must be. Rather, they should provoke a badly needed discussion about the accessibility and the quality of dental treatment in our province.

How many Nova Scotians can afford to go to the dentist twice a year as recommended? How many students? How many blacks? Poor people? How many of those can afford dental treatment actually do go? What kind of treatment do they receive once they get there? How can a system which sees a dentist earn more when he or she processes more patients provide optimum care for these patients? How can dentists holding jobs at Dalhousie or the VG or both, in addition, to their private practices, do any position justice?

These are questions which the dental profession, being number two, has until now escaped all too frequently. Next time you have a toothache you might start asking them.



Christian sexism repels

Dear Editor,

In her interview with the *Gazette* (October 16), Lois Wilson, new moderator of the United Church of Canada, spoke of feminist theology. She ignores the blatant fact that Christianity is inherently sexist, what with God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost all being male.

This inherent sexism is one major reason why I, even though I am a male, could never be a Christian.

Yours sincerely

Editor's Note: The name of our reader was withheld at his request.

LETTERS TO EDITOR

Please note that all letters to the editor must be type-written. We were unable to print several letters this week because they were hand-written.

Correction

Correction: Glenn Walton (not Glen Wheeler) wrote last week's review of "Divine Madness".

the Dalhousie Gazette

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The views expressed in the *Dalhousie Gazette* are not necessarily those of the Dalhousie Student Union, the editor, or the collective staff. We reserve the right to edit material for space or legal reasons, or if it is considered offensive to our readers.

The deadline for articles and letters-to-the-editor is noon on Monday. No unsigned material will be accepted, but anonymity may be granted on request. Letters should not exceed 500 words and must be typed on a 64-character line and double spaced. Local Advertising is handled by DAL-ADS — the advertising department of Dalhousie Student Union: Tel. 424-6532. Ad copy must be submitted by the Friday preceding publication.

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