

Walls of bigotry

To the editor:

While the Gazette has been maintaining its policy of not printing racist, sexist or homophobic material, a policy which I agree with, some of the worst racist, sexist and homophobic material imaginable is to be found all around this university. Death threats against gays and lesbians, messages advocating the sexual assault of women and racist epithets are all commonly found around campus. The fact that these messages are found on library desks and washroom walls makes them no less reprehensible and does not excuse this university of the fact that they are being left in place for years to continue spreading hatred and bigotry.

Joseph Peterson

More PIRG

To the Editor:

Hopefully by now you will have heard that a group of Dalhousie students has been organizing a Public Interest Research Group (PIRG) over the course of this year. In a few weeks, you will have a chance to cast your vote for the establishment of an active new voice for Dal students on issues of public concern.

We write from McGill University, where Quebec PIRG was established just over a year ago. While all PIRGs are run independently of each other, we would like to express our support for PIRG at Dalhousie. We think that the successful petition drive conducted by PIRG's many volunteers shows that the PIRG model can work in Nova Scotia as it has elsewhere.

Since the PIRG idea was first conceived in the early seventies,

PIRG chapters have been organized at over 120 universities across North America. PIRGs are typically student-directed, student-funded, non-profit organizations conducting research, educating both the student body and the community, and working to effect social change. By offering a structure that can focus the potential power of a university community, a PIRG give students an influential voice on issues of public concern.

McGill students voted in 1988 to establish QPIRG by funding with a \$3 per semester student fee. The fee is refundable — but despite extensive advertising, only seven students claimed their refunds last term. There is also a second chapter at Concordia University which received its referendum funding this year.

Quebec PIRG at McGill is a dynamic and growing organization with about 100 active members. Our first project was the establishment of a paper recycling program on campus. While

continuing research, education, and action on waste management, we have also started a tenants' rights project. With the assistance of a full-time community organizer, students are knocking on doors in a local neighbourhood with the aim of establishing a tenants' association.

Some of our other projects include internships by which students do research in the public interest and get credit for it; establishing a resource centre with materials not otherwise available on campus; and a quarterly sixteen-page newsletter produced entirely by students. Last summer we hired three students to do research into recycling and other issues.

The upcoming referendum at Dalhousie will give you the opportunity to establish an equally effective organization to work on issues of local and province-wide concern. Cast your ballot in favour of PIRG on March 13, 14, and 15.

Shannon Dodge
Member, QPIRG-McGill Board
of Directors

DSU speaks out

To the Editor:

Recently the New Beginnings Ministry held a conference entitled "Homosexuality and the Church". As many of your readers know, this weekend was marred with controversy. Foremost among the complaints was that some subject matter presented during the conference discriminated against homosexuals.

Due to these allegations, the DSU Council asked its Executive to discuss the content of the conference with its organizers and persons attending in order to determine whether or not discrimination occurred. Based upon these conversations, we were then to report to the Dalhousie student body of our findings.

It is the DSU Executive's opinion that aspects of the conference "Homosexuality and the Church" were discriminatory. From the discussions, it appeared all organizers held a sincere belief this conference could bring people to a better understanding of themselves and improve their relationship with God. The result, however, found a group of people singled out because of their sexual orientation and made to feel dehumanized and/or less than equal to their citizen peers.

A position presented by some persons at the conference (and that which the DSU finds most problematic) was that, according to scripture, God's ideal relationship is heterosexual. Also, all persons on earth are inherently sinful.

The unavoidable extension of this logic is that while all persons may be fallen, lesbians and gay men have, in the eyes of God, fallen further than all other persons. With meeting God's ideal as a stated objective, lesbians and gay men are relegated to a position of second class in a hierarchy arbitrarily imposed.

The DSU, therefore, is opposed to the view, as presented at the conference, that gay and lesbian people do not share equally with any of God's ideals. We hope sexual orientation is irrelevant to a fulfilling and harmonious relationship with God, however S/He is manifest. Indeed, sexual orientation must not be seen as a barrier to the love and peaceful union one has with him/herself, community, or God.

We also hope members of the New Beginnings Ministry consider the opinion of the DSU with regards to the content of the Homosexuality and the Church conference.

Paul D. McNair
Executive Director

Dave Shannon
DSU President

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