

On the Carnival trail

by Ken Burke

I'm not doing this to make money. I'm doing this for Dalhousie students." — Winter Carnival chair Neal McCarney.

When I decided to report on Winter Carnival for the Gazette, I knew I had some hidden motive. It wasn't the allure of excitement and forbidden thrills at the King-Queen pageant last Wednesday. It wasn't the prospect of seeing EPA's red Ferrari side-by-side with Misses Halifax and Nova Scotia at the opening ceremonies. It wasn't the Dance marathon. It was something personal.

It was school spirit.

You see, I don't understand the idea of school spirit. From junior high on up, I always looked at people with "it" like most normal folk look at Hare Krishna tambourine-boppers. I thought it was some kind of fad, like beetle boots, clacker-balls, or John Diefenbaker. And it's always fascinated me.

So when last week's Gazette lay-out night reared its ugly head something inside me said "go for it." If I was to ever find out anything about school spirit, I wasn't about to do it in the cynical sauna of the Gazette. Too much listening to CKDU and too many Dartmouth Regional City Library press releases were getting to me. Irony was taking over completely, and I saw only one way out. I took it . . .

on the carnival trail

Even before it opened, this year's Winter Carnival began with a distinctly Dalhousie flavour — a beer sponsorship scandal.

Besides school spirit (or the search for it) carnival also had loads of major corporations in on the fun and (marketing) games, sponsoring everything God made possible to sponsor. Craven "A" and Carlsberg, Seagram's Humpty Dumpty and even CFS's Travel CUTS were all there, providing products and prizes alike in return for their brand name being emblazoned everywhere, usually including carnival chair Neal McCarney's clothing.

Both student council and the corporations involved see corporate sponsorship as a great deal for all sides. For instance, the contract the student council worked out with Carlsberg provides for Carlsberg giving Dal over \$4,800 worth of services, cases of beer, Carnival prizes, Gazette ads, and promotional posters. In return, Carlsberg receives "sole brewery sponsorship of Dalhousie Winter Carnival 1983," 50% product availability at all Carnival functions, a free ad in the Carnival newsletter, and a resale price on their beer of \$1.35 per pint.

In other words, during Carnival, beside the amount of advertising at events, Carlsberg beer will cost the same as Nova Scotia beer, and will only rise to its normal, more expensive "western" price after February 4.

That contract means exposure for Carlsberg. An advertising wizard somewhere came to the conclusion that the best way to break a university campus is to blast your way in. And that's how they operate. Breweries battle it out every week for sponsorship of society, frat, DSU events and "athletes of the week." Just getting their name on that four colour poster and being mentioned on stage in front of a howling audience is sufficient.

I've always been skeptical of how effective these blitzes are. But sponsorship and ad blitz tactics are what Carlsberg went after and got. There was this one wrench in the works, though.

ing carnival week. The Inter-fraternity pub crawl, scheduled during carnival and organized through Super Societies' 83, provided a seemingly perfect mix of eager fraternities and willing brewery to make for a successful deal.

The fact that Carlsberg was there first apparently wasn't considered, even though George Fraser, Moosehead's Dalhousie representative, sits on student council and would have been aware of the sponsorship. The deal was made for Moosehead sponsorship.

According to Neal McCarney, Super Societies' chair Winston Brooks also knew Carlsberg was the sole sponsor. "Winston never approached me about this," he said. "He used me to his own ends."

Brooks said the whole matter was "blown way out of proportion."

"There was never any threat to Carlsberg, or the Winter Carnival committee. It was something the Inter-fraternity Council did as a separate entity," he said.

Super societies is a competition run concurrently with Dal Winter Carnival featuring contests between campus societies in a series of events such as ice sculptures, pub crawls, spaghetti-eating contest, talent nights, and assassin contests.

When Council learned of the sponsorship, the shit came down fast and hard. All Moosehead posters for the event were torn down on council orders, and both Moosehead rep and Super Societies chair were alerted to the seriousness of the deal. Moosehead corporate representatives filed into the Council offices for calling-down while at the same time a phone call from Carnival Business Manager Bill Chernin brought Wayne Ellis, Carlsberg's Canadian Vice-president, flying to Halifax to witness the affair's handling. According to McCarney, "Carlsberg could have revoked the agreement, but they didn't."

Instead of revoking his "lucrative" contract with Dal, Mr. Wayne Ellis had the distinct honour of spending his Wednesday night judging the King and Queen pageant instead of enjoying an early bed in suburban Ontario.

day one . . .

The king and queen pageant originally scheduled as an eight o'clock extravaganza in the Rebecca Cohn had by last Wednesday become a Green Room event in the SUB, with only one hundred people there at its peak. Of that hundred, only 40 were paying — the others were either Carnival people, media people, or the real McCoy — performers and their supporters.

Scanning the places before the pageant began, I took note of the array of prizes — Craven "A" carry-alls, Craven "A" tote bags, Craven "A" caps, Craven "A" kit bags, Carlsberg Mugs, "Keg" shot glasses (& dinner for two), plus sunny yellow carnival T-shirts and buttons. Winston Brooks was attending as Super Societies' chair, but he seemed agitated. "Write in your paper that this bloody thing started late," he exclaimed pointedly. Sure.

By eight-thirty, the evening had finally degenerated into the scheduled event, with C100's Bob & Bob as hosts. In between B&B's so-stale-it's-funny humour, five societies did their bits in performances featuring their "prince and princess." The panel of judges — a C100 radio type, one of the Misses Halifax or Nova Scotia and Carlsberg's V-P — then were to decide on their King and Queen couple.

The end result was Dal's (probably) first all-male King and Queen (sic) cou-

ple. Warren Jones and Donald McInnes, from Phi Delta, performed a fairly standard drag/stud parody against a backdrop of eight or nine preppies doing the best precision dancing — or at least swaying — of the evening, to ABBA's "Dancing Queen." Other teams provided soft shoe on carpet, one humour bit, a very straight rendition of the song "If" (where my notes descend into the obscene), and a very spirited Commerce team.

The more I think of it, Commerce best personified that "spirit" I'm searching for in Carnival. An indecently inept (drag, natch) "sweet transvestite" lip-synch led into a reasonably ace rock'n-roll stomp by "The Hard-ons." They sounded more like the group Trio (Da, da, da) than Greg Kihn considering they were doing a cover of Kihn's "Breakup song." The singing could have made me yearn for Yoko Ono at the mike, but I had FUN. Un-self-consciously delish fun — that I am beginning to suspect is a major part of this "spirit" equation. If they only could have dumped some of the crassness, they could've won a convert.

day two . . .

Thursday's Terry Hatty/Casino Royale event proved something of a

puzzler on all sides. There should have been more people here, but there wasn't. And when they did get inside the SUB, their actions (just about) completely mystified me.

I arrived half an hour late for the 9:00 start time, making my way to the Terry Hatty-scheduled McInnes room. As most people who have seen Terry Hatty can say, he's very fine.

Hatty and group are a sharp rock'n-roll outfit, able to please crowds equally with well-chosen covers and originals. When his first Canadian hit is had and Hatty packs it up for the Toronto-LA routine, more than a few local citizens will regret not having utilized the man more when he was here.

So I wasn't expecting to find an empty room. There were easily twice as many SUB staffers in the room as paying students. The scene smelled of death. The third of the room open for dancing yawned ominously as bar people tried to look busy and a gaggle of bouncers traded old bouncer stories like going-on-senile war vets. At least Hatty's not on stage now, I thought, and wandered to the Green Room to experience the "Casino Royale."

What happened for the rest of the evening can best be put into point form:

1. The gambling was centred around these prizes: CUTS tote bags, a Dal jacket, Carlsberg light kit bags, Carlsberg woolly tops, cases of Coke, Sea-



Rockwell/Dal Photo

— A bloodshot "Eye of the Tiger"



Rockwell/Dal Photo



Graham/Dal Photo



Priest/Dal Photo

gram's caps, and records from Kelly's.

2. By ten o'clock, paid and volunteer staffers were finally outnumbered by people paying the three bucks admission. However, the casino was doing brisk business while Terry Hatty played to a mostly empty McInnes room.

3. Business for Terry Hatty only picked up when McCarney closed the gambling tables for ten minutes so people could catch his act.

4. Only 231 humans paid for the evening. The break-even point was 600.

Why? The night was well-publicized, had entertainment known to be in demand (T. Hatty and gambling alike). In fact, Winter Carnivals in the past few years have never been given the build-up that "Eye of the Tiger" has, through all media sources, plenty of posters, and much general talk. The weather was mild, there was little else running opposite the event, so . . . what went wrong?

Not Terry Hatty, at any rate. Despite the small initial crowd, he played as if to a large audience, even jumping about the stage in parts. Later on, the dance floor was actually filled — with room to breathe, unlike most Super Subs. With covers as wide-ranging as "Stepping Out," "Tempted," and the theme from "Cat People" (?), he achieved his usual trick of sending most everyone home more than happy.

One thing does seem clear, though — people would rather spend money gam-

bling for a little "reward" than on worthy entertainment.

day three . . .

I wonder if all Winter Carnivals are like this.

Friday saw the "official" opening of Carnival, which I assume had to be scheduled into a fairly light activity day. That day fit the bill.

The first thing you might have noticed if you were in the SUB lobby between 12:00 (supposed start time) and 12:30 (when the ceremonies actually began) was people looking at the four foot square Carnival cake and grinning over-large grins. Unfortunately, the Beaver Foods chef made a small spelling mistake on the cake, providing us with a Dalhousie Winter Carnival, not a Dalhousie Winter Carnival.

The cake was positioned smartly in front of the Craven "A" Model "A" replica panel wagon in the lobby. Also positioned around the auto was a Dal security guard, hired by Craven "A" especially to safeguard their machinery for the first day of its arrival on campus.

Craven "A" people were a bit spooked when they heard and read about all the damage and pranks done at Dal recently (Engineers, break-ins, thefts) and thought their money well-spent for the peace of mind. By the way, the car's not necessarily as antique as it looks — many of the parts are custom

made, and in fact there's a factory in the States that's just pumping out these antique models for public oohing and aahing . . .

Once the prerequisite dixieland band, the Waterfront Stompers, began doing their thing, the lobby began to fill up and soon people began to expect that something special would happen. It did.

Neal, wearing his green-on-white Carlsberg T-shirt, began rounding up six young-teen-age (if that old) girls wearing blue sweaters, red skirts and toting pom-poms. They eventually moved in front of the antique auto and the cake, formed a rectangle, and then music hit the scene. Familiar predictable power chords churn through the air, and . . .

Eye of the Tiger. These six kids from Major Stevens Junior High School, obviously scared out of their wits to be in front of a crowd of University students, were performing a cheer to the song "Eye of the Tiger," by Survivor. The instant they began moving through the cheer, the whole crowd went silent. In the most weird and twisted sense, it was like a flashback to school spirit in the 50's or 60's — or whenever you were in High School. Somehow, everyone in that crowd must have known what Winter Carnival is all about, and what it tries to do. I think I did. I was standing near the SUB front doors when the occasion began, and I'll likely remember as long as I live the reaction of those people entering the building. "I don't fuckin' believe it," gaped one hefty Commerce student.

When the song was over, a hearty round

of applause was provided for the cheerleaders, but I still maintain the initial reaction was stunned, not attentive. Those girls were definitely trouper. "They were nice," said Cheryl Richards, the student union's secretary. "You should say that."

As for the "Mardi Gras" parade around Dal campus following the opening ceremonies, nothing much can be said for it, save its funeral rites. The parade features two entries — one by the very active Commerce Society, and one from Howe Hall's Smith House. But what was more interesting were their floats.

The Commerce Society, never ones to buck a good corporate steed, had at least one case of Carlsberg one a flat-bed trailer towed by a Sierra Classic four-by-four. Smith House, on the other hand, obviously felt an oath of loyalty to Moosehead — they entered the parade as a walking "Alpine" case (Alpine beer is brewed by Moosehead).

According to my sources, the Smith House people at one point in the lonely parade began chanting "No Carlsberg! Down with Carlsberg!" or something to that effect.

Not to be outdone, the Commerce Society managed to be pulled over by the police in front of the Tupper building for consuming some of the Carlsberg in the open. Who says beer isn't fun to drink?

Next Week: Bad craziness at The End