

Stuck in Neutral full of errors

To the editors,

I am writing in response to your recent editorial entitled "stuck in neutral." In it you make the very serious allegation that the executive of the Dalhousie student union is "engaging in not-so-subtle union bashing".

Two concrete actions are described by your editorial in an attempt to support this charge. First, you say we were "creating a petition" which sought to express students' views that a strike be averted. The petition was not created by the Dalhousie Student Union, but by an individual student; but we agreed to make it available. Incidentally, if you check the actual wording of the petition, it clearly lays the primary responsibility to settle on the administration.

The second action you attributed to the Student Union involved linking ourselves "fairly overtly" to the administration by "mailing out (our) leaflet in the administration's mailout."

No such mailout was conducted by us, either with or without the administration. Where this idea came from is unclear, but it is beyond comprehension that you make this assertion without any confirmation of its basis in fact.

I am expecting that you will print a retraction regarding the above allegations. I also hope that you will apologize for the possibly libelous charge of "union bashing" unless you can present alternate, concrete facts which are true.

Yours sincerely,
Caroline Zayid

Astonishing!

To the editors,

It is truly astonishing that Theresa MacDonald professes to know my "real views". The only two factual items in her letter were the fact that I did not attend the Daly lecture (which is irrelevant since my letter was concerned with Samantha Brennan's article, not the event itself) and the fact that I have spoken with Miss MacDonald.

In the two discussions (and I use that term very loosely) that I have had with Miss MacDonald I tried to explain that I do not think that it is very useful to make the blanket statement that "it is harder for a woman to live in this man's world." Inequities have to be individually identified if they are to be eradicated. In addition, it was my understanding that we were not just talking about "our society". In fact, I thought that it was quite clear that we were not restricting our discussion to the twentieth century.

I asked Miss MacDonald what she meant by "harder". Her sole concern seemed to be that "a woman earns 66¢ for every \$1 earned by a man in a comparable job." I agreed that this was an inequity and should be rectified immediately. I then tried to explain that the quality of life cannot be

measured in dollars and cents and suggested that since male and female experiences are qualitatively different, even if traditional gender roles are completely eliminated, they cannot really be compared objectively over such a broad frame of reference.

I am puzzled by Miss MacDonald's use of quotation marks. The words found between them are definitely not mine nor can I lay claim to the sentiment that is expressed. To quote out of context is bad enough but to misquote as well is just plain irresponsible.

As for my personal views, I still contend that all sexism is bad, whether it results in discrimination against women or men. I also think that those who stifle meaningful dialogue are guilty of an intellectual cowardice that is equal to that of those who twist other people's words to suit their purposes. Both of these points were quite clear in my original letter.

Inequalities do exist but they do not, as Miss MacDonald continued to insist, always favour males. In fact, the point that I was trying to make was that there are many inequalities which are not restricted to gender which deserve as much, if not oftentimes more, concern. For instance, someone with cerebral palsy or ALS, whether male or female, probably has "a harder time". Both male and female children are starving in Ethiopia. Unfortunately, Miss MacDonald could not divert her attention from that 34¢ for even a moment.

Although I am deeply concerned with women's rights and support every effort to eliminate any legitimate inequalities I do not think that women are the only group deserving or requiring justice.

It is not surprising that my message did not get through to Miss MacDonald. I did not ask her to accept my views, merely to consider them. My mistake was trying to appeal to her as an intelligent human being when she, because of her own sexist attitudes, could only deal with me as a man disagreeing with a woman. It is too bad that Miss MacDonald would rather talk about me and at me, than talk to me and with me.

Sincerely,
Brian D. Fantie

P.S. I would like to question the editorial policy of the *Gazette* which permits the publication of unsubstantiated and personally libelous statements which extend not into current issues but derive from personal conversations. The *Gazette* should learn to distinguish useful vindication from spiteful vindictiveness. An apology is in order.

Appalled!

To the editor,

"Oh, oh, I'm so appalled by your sexist rag! Oh, how could you print a picture of a nun getting a close look at the crotch of a statue (*Gazette*, Nov. 29, p. 12). In doing so you implied that all women have only one thing on their minds, even if they give a vow to chastity. Oh, what a fecal specimen you publish! Oh, oh, you have nothing to say and I hope you never publish again!

Oh, oh, I looked all over campus and I couldn't find a building that didn't have heaps and heaps of your women hating journal!

Many of you probably realise that this is an overreaction to Ronald Carr's excellent photography. But it was purposely done to illustrate how several people reacted to the recent *Tupper Times* issue. In response to P. Dawson's letter (Nov. 29, p. 6):

It's a pity that you were so frightened by the intrusion of a medical organ in your cloistered world.

The *Tupper Times* is published by the medical students society and takes contributions from other health profession faculties and departments. It is not intended to be a publication for the entire Dalhousie community. Nor is it intended to reproduce the dry "literary redeeming" format of a major newspaper. Its main function is to provide us with a humorous look at ourselves and even present some important issues. This past edition was excellent at achieving these goals.

Those people who were so appalled by the *Tupper Times*

need never pick up a copy again if it scares them so much.

Robert M. Schertzer
Med II

Gazette slightly socialist, sexist

To the editors,

Congratulations appear in order to the readers of the *Dalhousie Gazette* if Amanda-Lynn Penny is representative of them. Miss Penny's letter of Nov. 25, 1984 responds to the question of "female intellectual equality with men" in a rational and sagacious fashion, unlike some of the authors on the *Gazette* staff.

My letter "Mail Genius" which appeared in the Nov. 15 issue of the *Gazette* was obviously in reaction to your editorial comments of the previous weeks. Surely it is the role of a student body newspaper to provide a platform (not a soapbox) for discussion and to educate the student body with responsible journalism. However, on review your editorials and the general tone of the *Gazette* staff are slightly socialist and definitely sexist (radically feminist).

The principle of equality behind your arguments is sound but the

methods you employ in trying to sway individuals leaves much to be desired. I once firmly believed in affirmative action programs. Reality has now crept into my microcosm and experience has taught me that these types of programs are rarely successful in the long run and always meet with great resistance, often causing a more discernible segregation of society.

Perhaps your attitudes on women's issues would be more readily accepted if you (the editors) tried to educate rather than tyrannize your readers. A more persuasive approach would be more effective and not cause the small 'C' conservatives such as the undersigned to appear reactionary and extremist.

Remember, women are a silent majority, not a minority and should be treated as one. If women do not like their current status—as they perceive it—the methods are available to make their collective thoughts known.

The whole "issue" of women's rights and feminine protest deserved a well-needed rest. Progress is progress, not revolution. The phrase "slow and steady wins the race" seems to apply here.

Christopher Thurrott

The chasing your own tail syndrome

THERE IS A PHENOMENON IN student politics known as chasing your own tail.

It occurs when student leaders, charged with the whole concept of representational democracy, decides to blindly follow their constituency which in turn is usually following them. The end result is confusion as the political process gets wrapped up in a slow circular waltz.

Rather than decide which side they're on, the student union has done its dance between the faculty, the administration and the students — inadvertently ending up offending everyone from one day to another. One day they are opposing any strike action the faculty might take under any circumstances, and the next day they are talking about taking legal action against the university.

Trying to look out for what they perceive of as "student interests," they have only thrown self-interest into a debate that should be fought on the merits of the respective positions of the two disputing parties.

Of course students can be and will be hurt by this dispute.

By trying to play the middle-road in hope of some kind of student union action that would force the two sides to reach an agreement (for example, taking legal action against the university), they are merely showing us how vain they can really be. They are merely fooling themselves if they think this two-step of theirs is going to solve anything in this dispute.

By coming out and supporting the DFA the student union is not about to avert a strike or pull some kind of power play on the administration. Instead they would simply be making a

simple principled stand that we could all understand.

No hocus pocus. No flashes of smoke. Its just a matter of doing what is right.

The student union has maintained its "supposed" neutrality for quite some time

RICK JANSON



now. How can they support the DFA's demands for a reasonable settlement and at the same time flip around and say the administration is not to blame for its bad offer? It is not the provincial government that the faculty have been negotiating with for nine months. It is not Terry Donahoe. It is not Brian Mulroney. It is the Dalhousie Board of Governors.

It is that same Board of Governors that is too easy to ignore as the student union lead charge of the light brigade heads downtown for a rendezvous with Terry Donahoe. It is not Brian Sure, underfunding is part of credible if the administration mismanagement of Dalhousie. So is the screwed-up priorities of an administration that wants to solve its monetary problems on the backs of its faculty.

Maybe the charge of the light brigade might be a bit more credible if the administration added their voices to the cries against underfunding. Maybe if Andrew MacKay was there next to Alex Gigeroff shouting "cutbacks— we say fight back." Maybe if the charge of the light brigade made a detour back to the administration building...but then again when you take a

position of neutrality...

When we are talking about a fair settlement for the faculty we are talking about more than money. We are talking about the very quality of the education we are going to receive in the coming years. Without good professors what value is this institution? That is one of the basic issues involved here for students.

If the student union wants to play a principled role in this affair, it should put the blame for this crisis on the shoulders of both the administration and the provincial and federal governments, and throw its lot in with the faculty. If classes are missed it will be a tragedy. But what students may have to return to afterwards may be even worse in the long-run if an equitable settlement is not reached.

Our self-interest and egalitarian principles should lie in the same place.

It is time for the student union to stop chasing its own tail. It is time for it to take a stand. It is time to make the down payment on the future, as painful as it may be. It is time for it to show some leadership by showing some solidarity. It is time for it to act as a students' union. That's right — a students' union.