

Criticism and Self-Criticism

In recent weeks the GAZETTE has been receiving criticism in various forms from various people. Some of it has been the regular criticism — "it's just a red rag," some has come in the form of subtle pressures from just a few people, and some has been constructive and beneficial.

There have been many things to deal with and the GAZETTE thinks it's time its readers and financial supporters knew what is happening. First, it must be stressed that our impressions are not necessarily based on actual events but on various bits of information and rumours that have been floating around for some time. No one has come out and presented us with a black and white picture.

It could be stated accurately that we first became aware of definitive Student Council opposition just after publishing the installments on the Student Council executive. Several conversations took place with the Communications Secretary whose task it was to relate the complaints he had been receiving. He asked that certain changes be made: that we get the facts behind our stories, that we print both sides of any story and that we limit any commentary to the editorial page features.

Shortly after this, 100 questionnaires were distributed in the Student Union Building with five questions. Asked whether the Gazette was "overly critical", 26 students said it was and 44 said it was not. 75 people were asked this question; the other 25 were asked if it was "overly political". 14 said yes and 10 said no.

The majority of responses to rating our sports coverage was "fair" or "poor". Most people said there was not enough coverage

of campus activities. Slightly more than 50% of the respondents said they preferred to read the GAZETTE than the University News, and the vast majority said they thought there should be changes in the paper.

Our sports coverage is slack, but we do need people to do it. Adequate coverage of campus activities is also lacking but we are beginning to improve that.

Obviously there should be changes in the paper. All the people on the staff agree there is room for improvement. The question is, in which direction do we want to go.

Two other events are specifically worthy of mention. Executive meetings of Council have been held and among the items discussed was the setting up of an editorial board of some sorts. Its composition and functions are not established yet, but there is certainly reason for being wary of its potential use.

The most recent event was even more disturbing. 100 notices were printed on GAZETTE stationary and posted throughout the university. They called on people to get rid of "yellow journalism" and to change the GAZETTE's "violent chaos" into a "gentle ordering". This was to be aided by attending our regular open staff meeting en masse.

These notices were not posted by the GAZETTE and they were posted without our knowledge.

Such actions are unacceptable. The justification for it was that a change was needed. But it served only to create animosity and mistrust amongst several people. Hopefully this situation has corrected itself.



There have been other small bits of information floating around that seemed, at times, to confirm the suspicion that a complete editorial changeover was being attempted. We're still here of course, but then again, the official changeover in editors comes at the end of January, and for the sake of keeping things cool, those-in-the-know will wait.

Perhaps we are jumping the gun, but if nothing else, this paranoia has enabled us to do work in areas previously left untouched. It has also pushed us to talk more about what we are trying to accomplish through working with the paper.

A staff meeting was held last weekend — many staff problems were dealt with, both personal and organizational. The internal structure was modified to make it more effective — definite deadlines were established for example. The philosophy and political position of the paper was discussed.

As a result, the GAZETTE will soon publish a statement of principles.

The lesson to be learned, of course, is that constructive criticism of this newspaper will have an effect.

Vague and inaccurate attacks, threats of budget cuts, whisperings of an editorial board and hints of a replacement of staff are reactionary, undemocratic and irrational.

Any newspaper must be free from censorship but at the same time it must be responsible in its presentation of stories. We are attempting to expand our range of coverage and at the same present an analytic and consistent newspaper.

The Dalhousie Gazette

Canada's Oldest College Newspaper

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