

Jesus not the reason for the season

I was 21 before I realized that not everyone did the Christmas thing. I had grown up in a small town and attended a Catholic school where religious diversity meant having a Protestant play the clarinet next to me during band practice.

In my second year at Dal I attended a potluck and was just hunting down the dessert tray when the subject turned to the Christmas tree that is put up in our Student Union Building every year. One woman was describing a bitter argument she had at a student council meeting where she and a couple of other people tried to persuade council against putting up the tree. Her reasoning was that Dal is a non-denominational school with students of many cultural and religious beliefs, therefore council should not insist on displaying a Christmas tree with its obvious Christian (no pun intended) roots.

I didn't know what to make of this woman's complaint. As much as I whined about Christmas decorations going up in stores before the Halloween costumes are put away, as often as I screamed when I heard Christmas carols in November and even though I would decide not to go home for Christmas the following year, I... well... kind of liked the damn holiday.

I enjoy trying to find the perfect gift for friends and family and imagining their expressions upon tearing the wrapping off a \$3 mood ring and a book on beer can collecting. I get a weird sense of satisfaction from digging the Christmas tree lights out of a dark corner in the basement, untangling them and checking each light individually until the string lights up. And I'd love nothing better than to take all my Halifax friends home and drive them through the streets of Labrador City after dark. In December you couldn't find a more beautiful and lit up town in the world.

I'm not denying that Christmas is stressful and the most financially debilitating time of the year for families that partake in its festivities. But at no other time of the year will I get the feeling in the pit of my stomach that makes me want to tell the people dearest to me "I love you," even though ten minutes earlier I wanted to strangle them with my Christmas stocking.

As I listened to this woman's argument I grew more and more defensive and wondered what her problem was. It was only a Christmas tree. Neither the tree nor the holiday held any religious significance for me. Didn't she know the feeling of contentment at being the only person awake at two in the morning, with only the glow of a Christmas tree to see by? Or the excitement of waking up Christmas morning to see a pile of presents under the tree, some of them with your name on the tag?

The answer of course, is no. She didn't celebrate Christmas, yet every year her student union served a 20-foot reminder that most Dalhousie students did, with a side order of un-Christian-like "Get over it" attitude.

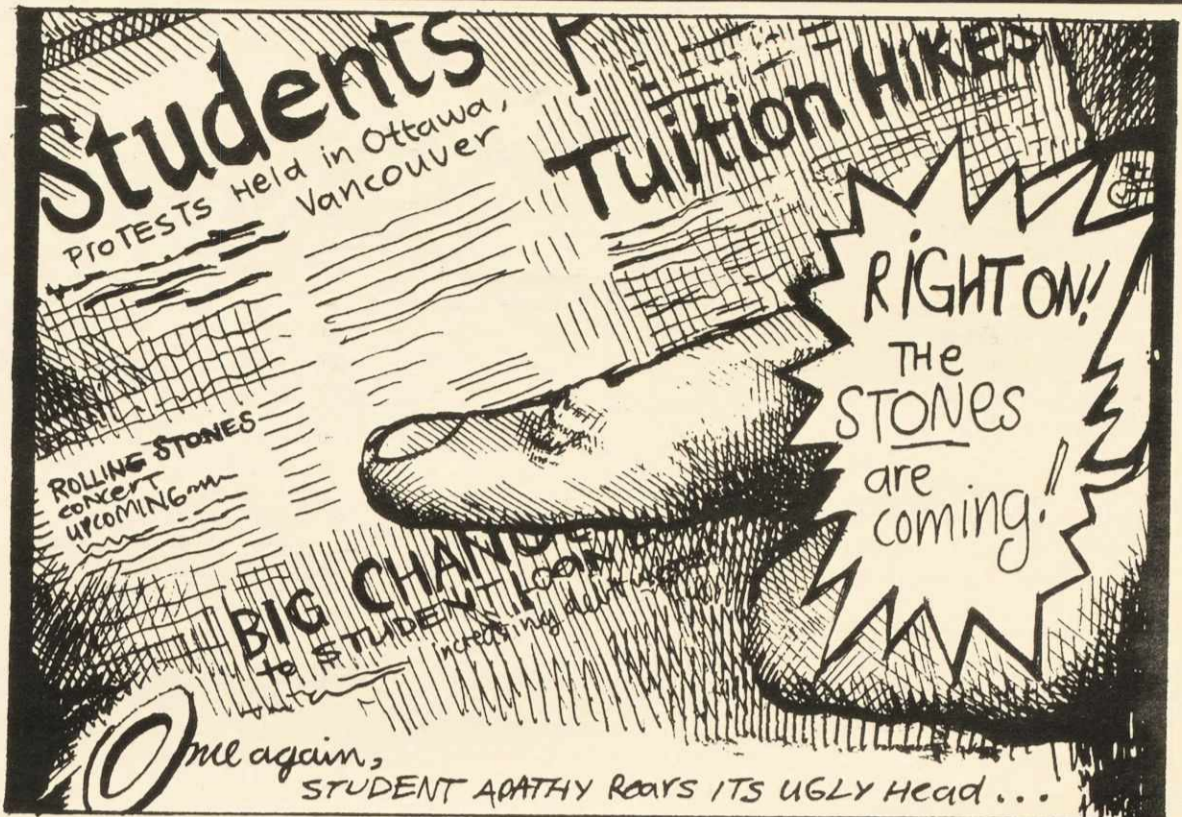
The Christmas tree has been erected in our SUB again this year, and any initial excitement I may have felt at seeing the tree died at the thought that tradition and stubbornness were the only reasons behind its appearance.

I can already feel people rolling their eyes as they read this and mutter "Politically correctness strikes again," but I protest. In a week's time I'll be home in Labrador adding my two cents to the world's environmental problems by chopping down a Christmas tree of my very own. And if I need a tree fix right away, I'm sure a trip to one of the many Halifax shopping centres will relieve my cravings.

Besides, not putting up a tree would be my Christmas gift to those who don't do that C-Day thing.

Happy holidays and may you find the Boxing Day Sale of your dreams.

Judy Reid



LETTERS

The Dalhousie Gazette welcomes letters to the editor. Letters should not exceed 300 words in length and should be typed and double-spaced. The deadline for letters is Monday 4 pm before publication. Letters may be e-mailed or submitted on Macintosh or IBM-compatible 3.5" disk.

Joe & Jo have "no scents"

To the editor,

I am writing in response to the "Ask Joe and Jo" column from 2 weeks ago. Their topic of the week was the "anti-freedom movement" on campus. I feel that the column was a misrepresentation of the issues at hand — specifically in terms of a "no scents" policy.

First of all, the authors failed to acknowledge the valid reasoning behind the adoption of "scent free" policies. Furthermore, their claim that such initiatives are "anti-freedom" is both absurd and offensive.

The authors have trivialized and ignored the very serious and debilitating condition of those who have Environmental Illness. People who have this condition are often very significantly affected by the innumerable fragrances wafting around (i.e., hair spray, hair gel, deodorant, powder, aftershave, perfume, soap, fabric softener, detergent, etc.). There are about 4,000 different chemicals used to make fragrances for such products, and often one product contains over 100 chemicals in itself.

Breathing problems (such as asthma or allergies) are experienced by 15 to 25 per cent of the population in Nova Scotia [all stats and facts quoted in this article are from the Nova Scotia Nurses Union]. These problems are often exacerbated by scented products. And sore throats, wheezing, migraines, dizziness, nausea, anxiety, inability to concentrate, seizures, fainting and muscle pain are merely some of the possible consequences for people with Environmental Illness. Some people are so adversely affected that they are unable to attend university and live "normal," free lives. Compromises on the part of some would facilitate such freedom.

The authors suggest that since "the scented and the smelly all have to pay the same tuition," we should all have a "fair share." They maintain that unless this is the case, we are dangerously approaching a state of "anti-freedom."

I ask, however: isn't "anti-freedom" what people with Environmental Illness experience now (if they can in fact attend university)? Where is their "fair share"? Are we to accept the argument that BECAUSE of their disability, well, they just won't be able to attend university? That it's their problem? NO! "Scent free" policies should operate on the principle of respect for others.

I would hope that in the future the authors of the column in question will attempt to educate themselves before contemplating such an insensitive commentary. I am confident that it is with more education and awareness about Environmental Illness that most people will consciously make an effort not to wear scented products.

Nora Bednarski

Reflection on men's violence

To the editor,

I would like to briefly comment on Glenn Wylie's article from the last issue. It seems there is something equivalent to a brick wall preventing Mr. Wylie from seeing what the "Week of Reflection" is about. Now it is up to us all to determine what we want to reflect upon, but I will offer you a couple of reasons why you should not have reflected on violence against men.

If men are victims of violence more than women it is because they are the perpetrators of it. Unfortunately, women too often become victims of that violence as well.

Mr. Wylie suggested that we don't offer enough reflection for those who died at war. Well, I do feel sorrow for the many men who fought for what they thought, along with the rest of society, to be noble. However, I also feel sorrow for their mothers who were prevented from holding the power to change the circumstances, yet had to suffer the loss of the children they brought into the world.

Maybe for the sake of people like Mr. Wylie the leaders of the event should consider changing the week's title to something like "Let's reflect

about how we can do away with all forms of male violence by ridding men of their domination of power, and therefore allow the basis of human interaction to be improved."

Oh, by the way, the difference between prostate cancer and breast cancer is that prostate cancer affects 80 year-old men whereas breast cancer affects 30 year-old women. That may account for the higher funding allotted to the latter.

Toby Moorsom

Sports editor responds

To the editor,

This is in response to Lynne Robertson's letter entitled "Women's victories not covered" [the Gazette, November 24, 1994].

She stated that "this paper has failed to recognize women's sport to the level it deserves." Specifically, she was angered that the article on the women's soccer CIAU championship "was small" and furthermore, that their victory "deserved front page congratulations."

Well, I, too, feel they deserved front page congratulations. Unfortunately, their victory coincided with the Week of Reflection supplement and the cover was already spoken for. We, who are responsible for turning out the sports section, expressed our disappointment and stated the case for having the women's great accomplishment on the cover, but the cover had already been promised to the Week of Reflection group and there was nothing we could do.

As far as the length of the article, it was the longest article of the year in the sport's section. This includes both men's and women's sports. The article and picture took up the top two-thirds of the first page in the sport's section. While I would have preferred to also have a photo on the cover, I don't feel that the article short-changed the team in any way.

That said, a valid point was raised in the article's omission of Carla Perry's

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