

## letters

## ETAN success

Last Friday night the Halifax branch of the East Timor Alert Network (ETAN) held a benefit concert at the Dal Grad House.

ETAN is a national association of groups and individuals working to raise awareness about Indonesia's illegal occupation and campaign of genocide in East Timor, and who actively oppose Canada's complicity in these crimes. This complicity has included voting against East Timor's right to self-determination at the U.N., selling military equipment to Indonesia, and providing tens of millions of dollars in annual disbursements of "aid" to the Suharto government (partially channelled through universities like Dal, which are willing to turn a blind eye to the human rights violations).

By all measures, the benefit was a great success; the music was excellent and over \$300 was raised to help bring Elaine Briere, founder of ETAN, to Halifax to give a talk and premiere her new film on Canada's role in the tragedy.

On behalf of ETAN Halifax, I would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to all those who contributed their time, talents and resources to make the evening possible. To all the musicians: Margo Carruthers, Dennis and Lorraine Cox, Shannon Cunningham and Lisa McKenzie of "five foot nine", Lou Duggan, Todd Keith, Steve O'Grady, Steve Read, Ben Ross, Phil Sedore (who, with Steve Read, did double duty as sound technician), Stacey Septon, Dave Stone, Craig Townsend, Al Tuck, and last but not least Katrina the unknown harmonica player. To Michael Leigh, manager of the Grad House for letting us use the facilities, and for providing us with door prizes and beer tickets for the musicians. To the Harbour Folk society for generously lending us their sound equipment for the second year in a row. To Jan Meyerowitz for his technical expertise in getting the system up and running and for helping to set things up. To Ewan Wallace for working the door in his inimitable style, and finally, to everyone who came out and donated to the cause. A thousand thanks to all. We'll be sure to notify you about the date of Elaine's visit as soon as it is fixed.

For more info on ETAN or on the situation in East Timor, contact Brooks Kind at 422-1265.

Brooks Kind

## Deeply disappointed

I was disappointed with the news that the DSU has hired a communications coordinator to help Mr. Carmen Barteaux meet his responsibilities.

Before the positions of vice-president community affairs and vice-president communications were combined, we had two executive members doing the jobs, each of whom was paid \$3000. Now, the positions have been combined into one supposedly full-time position. The salary, I believe, is \$12,000.

It seems, however, that Mr. Barteaux is not able to handle the work alone. So, not only is the student union paying twice as much money for the same work, it has hired another person to help out, costing us even more money!

From what I remember of the DSU elections last spring, Mr. Barteaux said a lot about what he would do as vice-president community affairs, and not much about what he would do as vice-president communications. I do not know if these jobs should be done by one person or two, but I do know that Mr. Barteaux should have known what he was getting into. Admittedly, I know little about these jobs; maybe there really is too much work.

However, I cannot feel much sympathy for Mr. Barteaux. I am sorry sir, you have disappointed me.

James Worrall

# Taking it to the streets

BY ALAN LEBLANC

Ontario has been fighting the ever-vigilant war on poverty. Originally anti-poverty groups began with the fight for welfare rights. Seeing this as an unpopular cause, they began to fight for the sake of child poverty, another transparent topic which meant more welfare. Finally they found a cause that is both saddening and doesn't cost Ontarians tax dollars: the homeless.

It began when the Ontario provincial government introduced legislation that would allow police officers to move the homeless into shelters, and sometimes hospitals. Naturally, the anti-poverty groups sprang into action, citing a conflict with basic human rights.

This is where I began to question these groups' motives. Why would an anti-poverty group prefer that people sit in the street and freeze to death? Once again, it is that same sense of self-righteousness these groups try to inspire on us, the uneducated and unenlightened. No matter what kind of danger they pose to themselves, or others, the homeless have a constitutional right to panhandle and harass others.

Sounds wacky so far, doesn't it? Unfortunately, a lot of people feel sorry for the panhandlers, believing the stories that they're just like us employed folks and they're just down on their luck. Allow me now to give you a breakdown of who compose the homeless, according to the Canadian Health and Mental Association.

An overwhelming seventy per cent of the homeless are actually mentally ill and sometimes schizophrenic. This would explain why there are so many homeless not willing to take advantage of hospices and other shelters.

The problem with a lot of their mental disorders may easily be remedied by provincially-funded medication, but no one has the power to force them. This is thanks to the tireless efforts of the Bob Rae NDP government (1990-1995), that passed legislation making it illegal to force anyone to take medication for a mental disorder. While this seemed merciful and in keeping with fundamental freedoms, it has actually endangered the lives of the mentally ill and others who may be around them. These people may not have any concept of reality. This may be why they don't have the sense to come in out of the cold.

Another twenty-five per cent of the homeless are alcohol and drug abusers. The obvious reason be-

hind their panhandling is to feed their dirty habit. Once again the Rae law prevents these people from being put into treatment centres against their will.

Had anyone thought that the reason they are out there is that they gave up a home and career to be alone with their drugs? Some people have trouble rationalizing this, but addictions provide a great escape. They're telling the world to leave me alone, I have my booze and pills to keep me company. This should be a good argument not to give to panhandlers.

The other unaccounted for people are teenage runaways, mostly street hoods and thugs. Oh sure, the pressure groups would have you believe that they don't choose this way of life, and that they are victims of sexual or physical abuse. The truth is that most of these kids simply couldn't stand living with their parents, confined to rules and discipline. If they didn't wish to live there, there are plenty of social services at their disposal.

The real story behind most of these kids is that they are unruly and sometimes destructive. Dressed up like punk rockers and prostitutes, they tend to harass and attack people who refuse to give them spare change. Does anyone remember footage taken in one of Toronto's city parks this summer? Vandals trashed the park, set fires, and brutally assaulted people in response to crackdowns on their intimidation. Now did anyone notice how well those kids were dressed? Fine leather jackets, nose rings, two-toned hair and fancy sneakers were all too common. Not bad for a bunch of derelict, poverty-stricken disadvantaged youths.

What I would advise is that people choose not to give the panhandlers money directly. Instead, donate the money to a soup kitchen, food bank, or shelter. Ultimately, this will ensure that they are being nourished and sheltered from the elements rather than wasting the money on booze or even cigarettes. How many people on the street do you see smoking? I thought it was a waste for well-to-do people to do it.

For the sake of the people of Ontario, I hope they have the sense to listen to the government on this one. What they have to realize is that the police are ultimately trying to help these people get back on their feet, while the anti-poverty groups seem to want to keep them out on the street. It's my belief that there is a place for everybody in this society, and no one is simply worth chump change.

## Clarification:

Senator Norman Pereira would like to clarify his position on horizontal and vertical cuts to university programming.

At a January meeting, Pereira said that if the Senate wished to make vertical cuts, it should discuss them in Senate, not in one of its sub-committees.

Pereira, himself, is not in favour, nor has he ever been in favour of vertical cuts to university programming.

# February is Black History Month

and the Gazette is looking for our readers' help in celebrating the achievements, history, and culture of the black people.

On February 6th the Gazette will be publishing its Black History Month supplement. The black community is invited to submit poetry, photos, graphics, prose, and feature articles to the supplement.

To get involved, call 494-2507 or come on up to the Gazette offices on the third floor of the Dalhousie Student Union Building, Room 312.

**Submissions are due Monday, February 3rd.**