

Does Halifax care?

Halifax is the graveyard for women's centres. Pictou County has one. Bridgewater has one. Major Canadian universities have one, often funded by their student council. But in Halifax they start, have a government-funded spurt, then run out of money, falter, and die, leaving frustrated workers and a cynical public.

Figures, the cynical public says. Another left-wing feminist flop. Women just can't get it together and run anything so it lasts.

That's an easy but destructive conclusion, and one that a lot of ex-women's centre workers buy into. Of course, personality and ability to organize are important to keeping a women's centre alive, but you can't do it without MONEY. And no, enthusiasm and hard work won't substitute for MONEY because that leaves workers burnt out. Volunteers can't replace the continuity from paid long-term staff, whose main job is to run the project, not do

that plus volunteer with ten other women's things in town.

As one former worker in Halifax's defunct women's centre said about the closing, "It was the funding that killed us. In this political climate, that's not a priority."

Example of women trying to take up the slack of underfunding by pushing themselves to publicize women's events: The NSCAD Women's Committee (see p. 14). \$800 means freebie films and speakers that won't draw the crowds. What they can't spend on advertising they make up in human resources (sweat) by running around. Now they don't even feel that they've made an impact on anyone there.

Example here at Dal: The women's centre, Patchwork, opened Oct. '86 and closed January '88 after a slow death following, yes, the end of the government grants for the two coordinators. One took off, the other stayed and tried to do it on a volunteer basis. The centre

was forced to move when Henson College needed to reclaim the space it had donated.

One of Patchwork's organizers, Brenda Beagan, concedes that the centre probably overextended itself by trying to bridge the university and community women despite its academic South End base.

The death of Patchwork also meant the death of its founder group, the Dalhousie Women's Alternative. The DWA arose from an attempt to revive the long-dormant DSU women's committee, but conflict over the constitutional right of men to sit on the committee led to the group's splitting away.

When Patchwork opened, most of the DWA people went over there or just faded away.

The post-feminist attitude of, "Hey, equality is here so you women don't need a separate place any more" is prevalent in the eighties, ten years after the boom.

Example: Mount Saint Vin-

cent. This supposed women's university can't even have their own pub to themselves for one night of the year to celebrate International Women's Day. Council tromped on that idea with horrible, self-righteous, "liberated" cries of REVERSE DISCRIMINATION.

However, the (female) Student Union president liked the idea of having only female performers at the pub night because it was so novel.

Wow, what a neat idea — female entertainers in the pub of a female university. The next thing you know, they'll be banning sexist yokel duos like Lambert & James (a group that some universities have boycotted).

The Mount a women's university? "That's a joke," says Tarel Quandt, Chair of the MSV International Women's Day Committee. "Student Council has no idea of women's issues." She says when she arrived here from B.C., instead of big, long-established women's centres like at UBC, she found child care, home ec — and while they're important, too, it was not the strong, women-oriented place she'd expected. Quandt was amazed to find no women's studies society, and a drop-in centre was formed just two months ago.

When I called the MSV student union to locate names of activist women students, the woman who answered the phone sort of blanked, then handed me

to Paul Card, External VP. He didn't know anything about that, and suggested I call the university President. The number he gave me turned out to be the Purchasing Department, but I eventually found Quandt, who was shocked that Card couldn't remember meeting her or at least knowing of the Women's Day committee. The letters war in the Picaro over the closing of women's pub nite and the resulting public forum which student union members attended must have slipped his mind.

And even Halifax has been without a women's centre since A Woman's Place closed five years ago. Like Patchwork, it slowly died, moving from place to place until it expired at Veith House. Some services formerly housed at A Woman's Place still exist, but there is no counselling and referral service, the "meat" of any women's centre, according to ex-worker Downton.

Local feminist and King's journalism professor Debbie Mathers says it boils down to four issues — money, policy, time, and space, and if you have the first, the rest sort themselves out.

The main thing, when looking at the rise and fall of assorted women's committees, groups, and houses, is not to become disgusted. It may get harder to revive the idea and excite people, but it will happen.

Heather Hueston

l e t t e r s

Christian

To the Editors:

I am a Christian. At least I consider myself one. Now, before any cynics out there move on to the next letter about politics, women's rights, etc., let me say that I do not intend to preach anything as many people expect Christians to do. I am writing this, partially, because members of the Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship group I attend were asked to write something to mark Christian Awareness Week, March 6-12, and because I'd like to provoke a bit of thought.

What is a Christian? Mother Teresa? Jimmy Swaggart? In the strictest sense, a Christian is someone who believes that there is an all-encompassing, all-loving God; that his son on earth was Jesus Christ; that Jesus lived his life as the Bible recounts and that he died on the cross, an absolution for the sins of mankind. To my way of thinking, this belief doesn't tell the entire story because Christianity also involves living one's life in the fashion described by Christ when he taught. Neither of these aspects should be viewed as the sole criterion of Christianity. For example, one friend of mine considers Christianity a "false teaching" and views the term "Christian" as meaning "fundamentalist Christian" in the Pat Robertson sense, a direct political threat to personal freedom of choice. When discussing reli-

gion with him, I came across as a right-wing bible-thumper. Some fundamentalists I've talked to, however, make me and my friend sound like pagans. My friend, nevertheless, is a genuinely kind and caring person who comes a lot closer to what Jesus wanted man to be like than many of the so-called "devout" Christians. Where does this leave us? I'm not sure, but it does lead me to an important point.

Christians need to be constantly re-evaluating their faith to avoid making things fit only two classifications, "right" and "wrong", or "Christian" and "non-Christian". Christians need to appreciate the fact that the religious and secular worlds are inextricably linked and that the ability to deal with the latter by using the guidance of the former is of paramount importance. Non-Christians need to be aware that Christianity probably colours more of their lives than they realize. A good way to begin reconciling these two artificially created groups of people is for all concerned to realize that Christianity is not meant to tell you everything you can't have, but to tell you everything you can have. It's time for non-Christians to re-evaluate their lack of faith and for Christians to re-evaluate their faith to find out whether it's bringing us all closer or making it harder for any sort of understanding to happen. If you have an opinion on the subject, try discussing it with someone who disagrees with you. It may just blow both your minds!

Hans Budgey

Crocodile tears shed

To the Editors:

Aggravation is what I have come to expect from the Dalhousie Gazette; your story on the lack of student involvement in the President's Symposium on Undergraduate Education is therefore not surprising to me. Students were actively encouraged to participate, and those who did attend were invited (or even requested) to give their opinions and perspectives at the discussion groups, workshops, and plenary sessions. "Student issues" were very much a part of the Symposium.

The editorial and writing staff of the Gazette grossly misunderstood and misrepresented the symposium. Its purpose was to initiate discussion among all groups concerned with the future of undergraduate education. President Clark emphasized that this was a beginning, not an end.

It is long overdue that the whining crybabies at the Gazette and in the Student Union start making constructive proposals rather than blindly criticizing the work of those who genuinely care about education at Dalhousie.

**David Ritcey
Symposium Delegate**

Election results are in

It was a resounding victory for DSU president and vice-presidential candidates, Juanita Montalvo and Terry Crawley over Scott Matthews and Chris Hopper.

The winners were low key but very happy as they watched the results posted in the Grawood. "Our friends pulled it off," said Montalvo. "It's a victory for all of us".

Montalvo took an early lead, winning every poll for a total of 1059 or 63 per cent of the total vote. Mathews received 619 or 37 per cent. Voter turnout was unusually high at 17 per cent of the approximately 10,000 eligible full and part-time students.

Montalvo becomes the third female DSU president since Catherine Blewett broke the all-male tradition in 1985/86.

Matthews was expected to clean up in residence but lost Howe and Sherriff Halls. "We got kicked," said Matthews. Running mate Hopper said he respects students' decision and won't contest the election.

Gerald Byrne and Steven Davis beat out Kevin Parker for Board of Governor representative at 1001 and 619 respectively.

The DSU referendum to raise student fees by \$6 was also passed, 1133 to 544. So, SUB manager Steve Gates can sleep easy.

Working

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conventional values, with later hours expected which do not accommodate women spending time with their families". Women are approaching 50 per cent of all law students in the country at this time, but the proportion of women actually practicing law is much less. Derrick believes women within law schools are "as highly motivated as, if not more than, men, with much more determination".

Derrick admits lawyers, to many people, are seen as being a large part of the problem in

society. She feels the law profession must "struggle against being a part of the problem and become a solution". She feels it is the duty of the law profession to strive towards a "better, fairer, more just society". She suggests, however, that working as part of the "system" to effect change can be a "slow and often compromised route", and that there is a great need for political change in the country and grass-roots movements to help bring about that change. She says people have become more complacent and satisfied with the way things are, but says she and her colleagues are "not satisfied — we are angry".