

World needs your help

Finale foolishness

It says something about our society (all right, I don't know WHAT it says, but it says something) that we only have one day a year dedicated to celebrating humour, and an unofficial day at that (meaning it doesn't make the Boy Scout calendar).

I don't know whose clever idea it was to put April 1st at the beginning of April. If there is any time of year when most students don't feel much like mirth, it's now, as we race down the Death Valley of pre-exam week, careening into the walls of dwindling personal finances, heightening summer job anxiety and, if we're trying to be creative writers, increasingly mangled metaphors.

We at the *Gazette* are students, too, and so it is with some wistful angst, but mostly a hearty "good riddance, let's hit the books", that we bid thee all farewell from our final edition of the year, an issue which we hope will lighten your mood for a mere moment, a minute, or an hour, depending on how thoroughly you peruse these recycled pages.

Judging by our never-empty mailbox and our near-empty newsstands, we know that Dalhousie's student publication has a regular and faithful readership in the thousands. Some of the most exciting material that we print comes from readers with a response to something we've written. If you're like me and flip to this section before any other, you'll know that reactions run the gamut from foaming-at-the-mouth outrage to eyes-rolled-back ecstasy, passing through sober contemplation and simple head-scratching bewilderment along the way.

Anyone who writes a letter is a staff member waiting to happen. It's no good huddling over a computer screen, tapping out a mean-spirited, non-constructive string of words (with apologies to J. Munro) and furtively slipping it under the office door. The *Gazette* does not require an "Angry Against Society" membership card to walk into the office and write a story, take over a page, or coordinate a section. The faces are different every year.

So, at the risk of sounding unforgivably cliché, the paper is what you make it. One beef, though (which reminds me — you don't have to be vegetarian to join either, but I'll like you better): spare us the head-above-the-clouds moralising about objectivity and presenting both sides of every issue. No professional journalist worth her laptop computer will tell you that objectivity exists. And we're not even amateur journalists: we're volunteers with no training simply trying to provide a voice to students who wish to speak their minds.

And as for the "both sides of the issue" thang, Miriam Korn's page 3 story points out that 90% of the *Globe and Mail's* sources are male. Is that balanced treatment?

But I'm slipping out of the tone of levity. So consider this a seed planted in your mind for next fall. The *Gazette* can bring you many joys, and free pizza every Tuesday night. In the meantime, ace your exams and have a sunny summer.

Ryan Stanley

The United Nations is under attack these days. Whether from gunfire or criticism, the UN is on the ropes and is in need of some support.

Defending the lofty principles of the UN Charter is a daunting task for any organization. The complexity and scope of many of our critical world problems is a pretty big mandate to lay in front of mere mortals to address! What kind of an organization would have the gumption and tenacity to think it can solve all these problems?

As a result of taking on this mission impossible, the United Nations has had to accept the lumps that go with the risky initiatives, high bills, and inevitable setbacks. Criticism of UN shortcomings runs fast and frequent these days. These attack everything from the apparent ineptitude of the UN in Cambodia, and the Balkans, a US-dominated Security Council, to the ugliness of the UN building in New York. Meanwhile, Boutros Boutros-Ghali has had a stressful debut as the guy in charge of this outfit. While trying to take the "bull by the horns" in dealing with some of these problems, he has been buffeted by financial woes, uncooperative states, and a rapidly expanding agenda.

As one who follows the UN's crazy existence with a special interest, I can't help but notice that the organization hasn't lived up to its mandate as well as it could have. However, the UN has done a hugely underrated job in fostering international coop-

eration. Listening to people dismiss the whole shebang as a "US tool for domination", or as "useless" annoys me as much for their ignorance as for their apocalyptic skepticism. The United Nations does not have the solution to all the world's problems or even most of them, but it is a highly necessary and constructive organization which is continuing to achieve much. It needs and deserves a defense.

The United Nations is not there to keep great powers from being powerful. There will always be hegemonic powers in politics, whether it be the United States, pax britannica, or Moguls. For the UN to function positively, cooperation must be achieved between these world powers and the rest of the "little" players. Pragmatically, if the big bully (say Uncle Sam) was open to Security Council disciplining, the result would be a fight that could get nasty and destructive. Obviously then, a Security Council which goes against the interests of the big powers (say Uncle Sam) will only cause more conflict and disunity that it is trying to resolve. That is why we need the much maligned veto.

That too many undeserving nations still have a veto at the expense of other aspiring and legitimate "powers" is also a fact. However, reform of the Charter is realistic. While it will be a long process, it is ultimately in the veto powers' interests to expand their club. After all, an illegitimate Security Council will not fool any-

one for long. Whether tomorrow's power lies the E.C., Japan, or in countries like India or (gasp!) Canada, the UN must reform itself in order to remain effective.

And the Security Council is only the tip of the iceberg. The UN has a vast and significant influence in many forms of international cooperation. Who coordinates the world postal system? A UN agency. Where do the norms and standards that form the basis of international law? UN resolutions, conventions, and ICJ rulings (also with the UN). What organization coordinates the attack on malaria and other diseases? Yet another UN agency. There is hardly a person on the globe not affected in some way by the positive work through the United Nations.

The UN is worth learning about. The organization touches on all issues in all countries. That it can make a difference is clear. That it can also make mistakes is also tragically clear. But an organization which has the power to change things fundamentally for the better is too good an opportunity to miss. Don't leave it to the diplomats either, get involved by learning and participating in campus groups such as UNDO (a PIRG project) and DUNMUNS (the model UN society). The UN deserves to benefit from energetic and constructive criticism, not to suffer from misinformed slander and dismissal.

D.A. Hobson

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 noon before publication. Letters may be submitted on Mac or IBM-compatible 3.5" disk.

Not so blue

To the editor:

I would like to comment on the letter submitted by the 2nd year co-op student in the March 25 *Gazette*.

I am also a second year comm co-op student sick and tired of hearing all the moaning from several other students in the program. I understand from first hand that not all placements contain opportunities of a lifetime but what did people expect? The student commented that he/she was "a firm believer in younger, less-educated minds labouring longer hours with less perks." Well it sure doesn't seem like it. If we weren't working now we would be during the summer, and most of the time for considerably less amount of pay and even more menial work.

Have any of these complaining individuals ever heard of "making the best of a bad situation"? And as for the work term report goes, if you're bored

at work, find a report topic of interest to start and maybe you'll learn something. The most successful people in the world work with what they have, so get with it and stop moping!

Another second-year commerce student

Aw, bug off

To the editor:

As the result of a term project I have found myself spending an inordinate amount of time during the last month holed up in the fifth floor of the Killam in the Dalhousie archives. The topic of the project is not important but, what it involved was careful examination of the *Gazette* between the years of 1930 through 1969. What I found was that the *Gazette* used to be a real and credible paper.

Taking into consideration the various social developments that have taken place over the decades since the

1930s the present *Gazette* fails miserably by comparison. The *Gazette* of yesteryear was well written and carefully and articulately presented both sides of an issue without the use of profanities or other offensive words and phrases. It would appear that the students who wrote for the *Gazette* in the early decades of this century prided themselves in pursuing a story to its fullest and not publishing anything until it was certain all of the facts had been established. From my experiences of reading the *Gazette* over the last three years it would seem this practice has not been adopted by the present day staff.

The Dalhousie *Gazette* prides itself in being the oldest college newspaper in Canada. This, in and of itself, is something to be rather proud of, but perhaps not at the standards it is presently operating at. I would rather see the oldest college newspaper in Canada cease to be (only to return after some serious restructuring) than be consistently embarrassed by it and ashamed of it.

J. Munro

the Gazette

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