

The power of the student press

Somebody once asked me: "Do you consider yourself a journalist?" Without thinking, I answered, "No, I never really considered myself one."

Then what do I consider myself?

I like to think that I consider myself a "student" first before anything else.

I guess when I hear the word "journalist," I immediately conjure up visions of snoopy reporters, annoying telecasts that attempt to sensationalize a mundane story, television cameras stuck in people's faces, tabloids exploiting every private detail of someone's personal life.

I looked up the word "journalism" and found a definition. Journalism is the "direct presentation of facts or description of events without an attempt at interpretation." Journalism is "designed to appeal to current popular taste or public interest."

Student papers play a unique role in the name of "journalism" and in the name of "students."

Someone once said that the media only reports on life, they don't actually live it.

This is what makes student papers unique.

Student papers rely on students for their existence. Students to decide what is important to them. Students to write the stories. Students to take the photos. Students to put it all together and produce a newspaper.

As students, we are at universities to learn, to participate, and to think critically. We are supposed to prepare ourselves for the future — careers, roles in society, leaders of government...

Of course, student papers are not without its flaws or criticisms. After all, we don't have the resources that the mainstream press has. It's a fact of life that student papers have to deal with, especially when your staff are student volunteers.

But that's also a good thing. Because student media depends on students, students are given the opportunity to participate and influence in a way that is otherwise not so possible.

I don't see the student media as being "alternative." I see the student media as being distinctly "student." We can take a story and present it from an individual student perspective — without the need to sensationalize or glorify for the sake of selling a product. The result may be a bit raw at times, but at least it's still distinctly "student." The student paper is what each individual student makes it.

Student papers are also different than student politics.

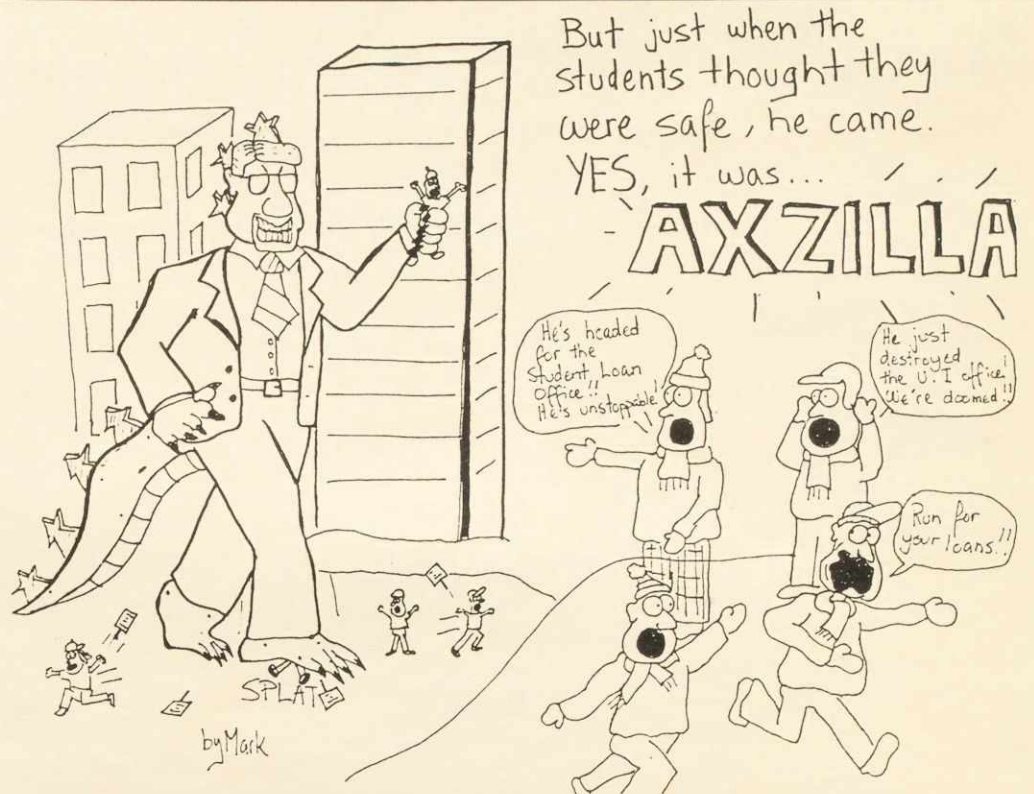
Last Wednesday, when thousands of students across Canada went on strike to protest the proposed cuts under Lloyd Axworthy's social security review, the *Gazette* was in the middle of production. In order to report on the whole story, we talked to other student papers across Canada. Within hours, we heard about how the strike was going in Toronto, St. John's, Regina, London, Ottawa, Montreal, Victoria...

The student papers were more "on top" of what students were doing and saying that day than the student unions.

Student unions represent students by having councils of students acting as representatives of other groups of students. In contrast, any student can ensure that his or her own point-of-view is presented in the student media. In that sense, the student press provides an opportunity that is truly democratic.

In this age of mass information and mass media, the real power is in communication, knowledge and opportunity. That's what being a student today is about. And that's what the student press is about.

Lilli Ju



But just when the students thought they were safe, he came.

YES, it was...

AXZILLA



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.

Clarification by Jo & Joe

To the editor,

We would like to take this opportunity to let our readers know that there was a general misunderstanding surrounding our second last article. We wrote a piece that was meant to be a "tongue in cheek" expression of our desire to see the return of a favourite Beaver Foods employee.

As it turns out, Beaver Foods took our position a little too seriously, and were concerned that their image as a "friendly" employer was being altered.

We would like to take this opportunity to let the student population know that Beaver Foods is not a nasty corporate giant, and they are very employee-friendly. Natalie's disappearance from the Union Market was as a result of her own actions, and not those of Beaver Foods.

So to all you consumers out there, Beaver Foods is nice to their employees, so be nice to them. And besides, Natalie is back!

Thank you Beaver Foods for bringing back one of your best.

Jo & Joe

our weak-ass demands. In saying "tear don the institution" and "drop out and turn on," I'm saying that I believe the onus is on each affected individual to try for serious change, not just turn out for an afternoon of chanting shit like "limbo for your education."

If you care, I don't. I think it's time for a new approach to learning. Education can come in many forms, and in many ways institutions are incapable of packaging it. Contained education is limited, lifeless knowledge. Ineffective rhetoric.

Do you think that if you stop going to school that you'll stop learning? If so, you've taken the bait. The school needs your vote, your supposed utility; that further entrapment will make you any happier?

Shake you brain-wash and come join me on the bad side of the moon. Power to the People!

Metallicus

Bonding protesters

To the editor (dear fellow particles),

We, like you, are just small part(icle)s in the univers(ity). Last Wednesday we were suddenly bonded with 1,500 other particles (without the support of the DSU) who marched to the Grand Parade to express our anger over Axworthy and his other worthless friends' Social Security Deform. Inspired by Mr. Metallicus' enthusiastic outburst at the rally, we began to ponder a few inconsistencies in the logic of the proposed cuts to post-secondary education.

Mr. Chretien and his cronies like to cut the national debt/deficit by saving money on social programs. In turn, they want to force students to incur their own huge debts. Education is transferred from a societal responsibility to an individual responsibility. Are not our debts part of society's debts? If not, who then is society?

This is a central question in the debate. The debate is not only about student fees. We see society as a lot of bonded particles who are attracted to each other — and students, unemployed, and underprivileged people belong and contribute to making it a whole.

When we look at the outcome of the proposals, we see only an increase in greed, individualism and expediency. Because we all will pay individually for our education, we will each expect a return on our investment, in the form of a well paying job. The philosophy of education becomes "user pays" and "job training."

But the laws of the free market don't hold in education. Axworthy is using cost/benefit analysis as if the benefits of education are calculable in figures. The benefits of an education are not just to the individual (and the job they may get from it), but are (when the university functions as a critical agent) to all. Metallicus wants us to "tear down the structure," but is he not taking slides with Mr. Axworthy in so asking? Shouldn't we concentrate on tearing down Mr. Axworthy's structure of society?

Mr. Axworthy and Mr. Chretien want to break our bonds, tear us particles apart, and increase our individualism. Individual particles can be easily governed, because they lack solidarity.

And they are lonely. But Mr. Axworthy and friends don't care about that. They worry more about figures than people.

Ann and Catherine (Cat) Ion

Thanking protest leaders

To the editor,

I'd like to say thank you to my student leaders. They aren't the ones in the offices of the SUB, but the eclectic

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Vol 127 No 14

February 2, 1995

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Silenced protester

To the editor,

Silenced by the politically-correct organizers of the so-called "student strike," I was unable to communicate the finer points of my perception of the debacle. Just a few things I wanted to say before I was brutalized and censored: The problem isn't just Lloyd Axworthy or the Liberal party. It's the whole system that gives that kind of power to an alienate(ing) structure like a central government.

Every year we strike. Every year there is one day of media attention. Every year the government ignores

Founded in 1869 at Dalhousie College, the *Gazette* is Canada's oldest student newspaper. With a circulation of 10,000, the *Gazette* is published weekly through the Dalhousie Student Union by the Dalhousie Gazette Publishing Society, of which all Dalhousie University students are members. • The *Gazette* exercises full editorial autonomy and reserves the right to refuse or edit any material submitted. Editorial decisions are made by staff collectively. Individuals who contribute to three issues consecutively become voting staff members. • Deadline for commentary, letters to the editor, and announcements is 4:00 pm on Monday before publication (Thursday of each week). Commentary should not exceed 800 words. Letters should not exceed 500 words. No unsigned material will be accepted, but anonymity may be granted upon request. Submissions may be left at the SUB Enquiry Desk c/o the *Gazette*. • Advertising copy deadline is noon on Monday before publication. • The *Gazette* offices are located on the third floor of the SUB, Room 312. • The views expressed in the *Gazette* are not necessarily those of the editors or the collective staff.