

# The Pen is mightier than the sword

Dear Friends, I had planned to write a patronizing, condescending, downright rude article, daring you and insulting you to write letters to polluters, to the government, to anyone.

It was mean — downright mean, and so we axed it. I apologize for planning to call you stupid. You are not stupid, you merely lack guidance.

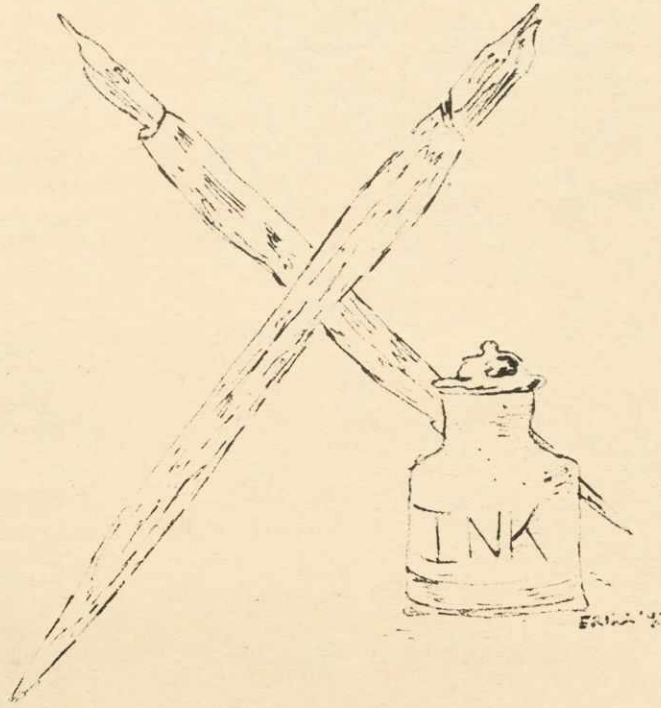
So rather than insult you, dear reader, it was decided that we should offer you guidance. So, here it is. Apparently, one group on campus, using these guidelines, has written six (count 'em, six) letters to various provincial government officials.

Can your group do as much?  
To use an old cliché, I dare you.

by P.J. McGregor

Letters to politicians expressing concern over environmental issues are a powerful form of direct action. It is estimated that one letter is worth 1,000 votes.

One of the most obvious environmental



victories that owed much of its success to personal letter-writing was the announcement by the British Columbian government declaring South Moresby a national park. The premier of BC received so many letters, telegrams, and phone calls it is rumoured his office had no time to deal with anything else.

So how do you go about writing a letter? Here are a few guidelines.

1. Be very clear about what it is you want the recipient to do. Make specific requests.
2. Ask questions in the letter that require a response. This will make them work on your behalf.
3. Make it clear that you expect an

answer.

4. Send copies to all affected politicians.

5. Send copies to other interested groups. An environmental group, for example, might be interested in knowing about your concern for a particular issue.

6. Keep a copy for yourself so that if you get a response you'll have your own letter to refer to.

Letters addressed to ministers are usually responded to by civil servants. Letters with a theme common to many other letters are dealt with by a form response. If you do get a response from your target person, carefully scrutinize the letter and respond. Look for inconsistencies with statements that have been made public. Look for any weaknesses in the arguments. If the letter is unsatisfactory, write back restating your position. If you are satisfied with the response letter, write back and tell them you are still keeping track of what is happening with the issue.

The Campus Environmental Action Group (CEAG) at Dalhousie will have sample letters at its display table February 12, 13, 15, and 16. CEAG will also try to answer any questions you may have about letter-writing. If you are interested in joining our letter-writing campaign, sign up at the CEAG table.

Adapted in part from the Temagami Wilderness Society's article in Connexions No. 50.

## l e t t e r s

### Down with violence

To the Editor:

I am writing in response to the person who argued against the Gazette's policy to print only letters "devoid of racism, sexism, and homophobia" (Letter, Jan. 18). While concerned with freedom of expression, the person does not address the result of extending freedom to the expression of hatred. Racism, sexism, and homophobia perpetuate violence in whatever form they take. Violence can be done with a fist, an image, or a word. We curtail the freedom of those who physically perpetrate violence. Unfortunately, by and large, we do not prohibit those who use an image or a word toward this end. No matter what the expression, we should be protected from violence. Keep the policy.

Tod Scott

### Lefties of the world, unite!

To the Editor:

I am writing to thank John Killen for his letter to the Gazette

regarding the plight of left-handed students (Gazette, January 11, 1990). As far as we can recollect, Mr. Killen's letter is the first time this problem has been raised; certainly, it has never previously been brought to our attention.

As you know, classroom with fixed seating have left-handed tablet armchairs down the left-hand outer aisle. The ratio is governed at present, therefore, by the number of seats across the room. Although technically it would not be difficult to increase the ratio, it would be fairly costly to make the necessary changes. I believe, however, that it is possible, if a little inconvenient, for left-handed individuals to use these desks, provided of course that there is not a right-handed student on their left who also wishes to use it. The problem in those classrooms which have moveable desks is easier to resolve but more difficult to monitor and control. This is because students will frequently move desks from one classroom to another after they have been set up by my staff.

In order to improve the situation for left-handed students, we will be taking the following steps:

a) Take an inventory of all fixed and moveable left-handed desks.

b) Determine the required ratio of left-hand to right-hand desks.

c) Budget permitting, purchase additional left-hand desks.

d) Just before classes start next year, put a note in the Dalhousie News and the Gazette regarding the situation vis-a-vis left-handed classroom furniture.

e) If there is a demand (and we rely upon your readers to advise us), mark left-handed desks in such a way as to make them more visible.

Finally, I would invite students who have particular concerns related to classrooms to get in touch with Dr. Renata Kartsaklis, Manager, Space Planning (Loc. 1078), who will be more than happy to assist in any way possible.

W.H. Lord  
Director

Physical Plant and Planning

### "Love and piss ..."

Dear Editor,

I think your paper is constantly a piece of crap, not worth the trees that get cut down to make it. Why don't you start to cover issues of importance, like what's going on at frat parties. Whatever happened to that Angeline Fourrette stuff anyway? And what about all these letters about the middle east? Why don't you write some kind of article about that, instead of just printing letters?

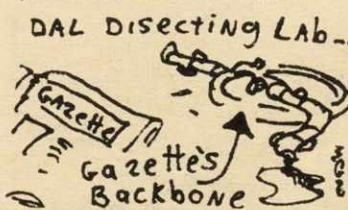
Do you have any backbone at

all? Is the Gazette worth picking up? Sure, there's some good stuff once a semester, and I like that Deaton guy, but the rest of it is so righteous and high-toned, I'm surprised that nobody has set fire to your offices yet. I'll bet that there is nobody on campus that even likes the Gazette. They probably pick it up because they are bored by their textbooks. Smarten up or get out of the publishing business, you lousy freak.

By the way, I'm ashamed to share a last name with you. When people ask me if I'm related to you, I have to spit on the ground to clear my throat.

Love and piss on you,  
E.A. MacKay

Ed note: We took the backbone out of the Gazette so you could fold it and take it home.



### Unilingual threat

To the Editor:

I am writing to express my outrage at the recent action of Sault Ste. Marie becoming a unilingual

English community. the French language is part of Canada and has been since the country's conception. It has gained much more acceptance in recent years, but this progress is now being threatened.

Dick Pearman, who heads an organization for "the preservation of the English language" is a dangerous individual. He sees bilingualism as a threat. It is not.

French and English are both vital to this country, for if one or the other is lost, most of this country's identity is also lost. Do not be afraid of bilingualism; it should be considered a fundamental right, and is a benefit to all.

Herb Theriault

### On the Leiter side

To the Editor:

This article has been written to clear up any misconceptions about the Intifada situation in Israel. Unlike several articles written by misinformed students, this one is based on solid facts, and thus cannot be disputed. Firstly, in reference to a letter (Jan. 25) by Samira Zayid, criticizing Israel's response to the Intifada: Ms. Zayid, please get your