

Comment

Comment is an opinion column open to members of the university community who wish to present an informed opinion on a topic of their selection.

Scavenger hunt—legal vandalism

Elizabeth Hiscott

Comments on comments made by Rory Waite, page five, Dalhousie Gazette, Feb. 17.

Regarding the maligned Dalhousie University scavenger hunters, particularly the four picked up and detained for a short time by police for trying to carry off the Halifax Transit bus shelter from the intersection at Oxford St. and Coburg Rd., on Feb. 5:

If scavenger hunts are sincere in that they do not want to get into trouble with police or cause bad feelings toward their university they should look at their activities from the viewpoint of the community.

You state that there is only one rule for scavenger hunters—that anything brought in for tally must be returnable—"One simply had to show up at S.U.B. with an object of unusual nature and have the object's and the group's name responsible for presenting it recorded" and to later return the object. That statement reinforces some public anxieties.

Are there no rules, unwritten or otherwise, to ensure that public property is not damaged, or persons inadvertently injured, frightened, or interfered with in any way during the 'hunt'? How reasonable or safe is a one rule game?

And let's face it guys (and gals?) if all students-turned-scavenger-hunters from our several local universities were allowed to break certain laws on one day each year, just for laughs, the youth in other institutions and organizations might want the same freedom. Boy scouts might like to steal instead of sell apples for a change, or kidnap little old ladies instead of helping them across a street; highschool students might like to borrow a few teachers (with the intention of misplacing them). And adults might decide that they too should be entitled to a night free from laws. An interesting evening might be had by all.

If our police were not as cooperative as you seem to think they should be some enterprising youths might be able to convince onlookers that they are legitimate, 'above-the-law-for-a-night' university scavenger hunters while walking or driving off with others' property, which of course they did not intend to return.

What are members of the community supposed to think when, unaware of it being 'scavenger hunters' night, they are witness to a disc jockey being dragged from a radio station by a group of Dalhousie University students? And isn't it a bit startling to similarly unaware, and perhaps near-sighted observer, to see a bus shelter moving along the street on 32 legs? He or she might think that the scientists have really lost control of some biological experiment and superbug was on the loose.

You refer to the "obvious, illegal, unsavory nature" of some of the original ideas which the Henderson House scavenger hunters had and discarded. But as some of the acts carried out were also illegal, I presume you think illegality is measured by degrees. Do you also believe that a woman can be slightly pregnant?

You complain about the lack of cooperation from those whom you, requested to assist you in such undertakings as borrowing or renting a hearse, borrowing a police car complete with a constable, kidnaping a disc jockey, etc.

But the best way to get something

you want is to give something someone else wants in return. You know, 'fair exchange, no robbery', and all that. If you want to involve the community, for their enjoyment, as you suggest, perhaps you should turn the scavenger hunt into a real show. Publicize it in local papers, on radio and T.V.; alert the public to the event; arrange to have reporters present at the tally session; and produce something interesting and entertaining for all.

Potential unusual objects might be such as: a public announcement delivered by a dignitary (Gerald Regan announcing a 50 per cent drop in power rates for residents of the province; Henry Hicks announcing a decrease in tuition fees; a National Research Council official announcing unlimited funds available for scientific researchers.) It would be up to you intellectuals to find a dignitary with an acceptable announcement or some other goodies worthy of the occasion. But therein would lie the challenge for the great hunters.

You might present objects such as Bill Smith's favorite recipe for barbecued spruce budworms. You might tally items such as wheelchairs donated by local philanthropists to needy people, or even a song composed or sung by a Nova Scotian, who might happen to be a senior citizen.

If the objects were kept secret until tally time you might keep the public interest, after staging at least one good show in which you presented some 'regular chaps,' good sports, real characters, etc.

But the point would be get unusual objects worthy of and people desiring of publicity. If you could manage to capture public interest and cooperation, you might, in future, need to tally your unusual objects in the new Metro centre to accommodate all the interested citizens. You might even be able to charge a fee and start a new scholarship fund to help students who wish to study communications and public relations. Just suggestions. You probably don't have time for such community-oriented activities.

But the community, particularly during this period of so many stresses such as high unemployment, increasing crime rate, inflation, Etc., might be more receptive to scavenger hunters who entertained them with more than adolescent pranks which result in too much energy being wasted by too many for too little.

I do not think that the poor in this community mind Dalhousie's "spirit manifesting itself" if it is truly Dalhousie's spirit and not that of a few pranksters we are seeing.

In regard to your comment on the community not letting you share your fun with them—doesn't mutual understanding and consent still precede an act of 'sharing'? And who was the judge of what was "enjoyable (for all)" Who spoke for all? You may have tried "to play fair, Honest!", but by your own rules, or was that rule?

I suggest that if you are sincerely interested in your relationship with the community, you might learn something by talking to your resident public relations expert, Derek Mann, Director of Information Services. It seems you are unaware of the resources of your own university.

Who knows, with a little advice, you might be able to make your future forays into the community,

good public relations events enjoyable to all.

Boys will be boys and all that, but

one must think of one's university image and protect it if possible while little boys are growing up.

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