

Voters: the captive audience

Charades. Lousy actor that I am, I've never really enjoyed playing the game, but I love watching others act them out.

Take last Saturday. I had the highly questionable privilege of graduating from Dalhousie — gown, furry hood, the whole deal. The academic costume added to the unreal atmosphere of a theatre, but the people on stage had quite clearly come prepared to perform well-orchestrated roles. (We were in the Arts Centre, after all.)

The Administration tried to project the illusion of conducting a convocation ceremony. What was actually going on was another act in that great charade of this season — the political process.

The point of a charade, I guess, is to be transparent, and this performance certainly was. To a crowd expecting the fairly neutral ritual of conferring Latin-inscribed pieces of paper, Howard Clark took advantage of the platform given him to expound, at shocking length, on Dalhousie's financial troubles and the approaches needed to address them. It amounted to an unwavering defense of his actions in recent weeks.

Meanwhile, standing in the wings was a choir of students from the Music Department waiting to perform a commissioned piece for the assembly. Funny, no one offered them a mike to give their impression of the budgetary measures the President has attempted to impose. The President somehow couldn't manage to thank them afterwards, either.

Finally came the keynote speaker, Douglas Campbell, financial securities baron and Dalhousie's newest honorary doctor. After praising his fellow New Brunswick capitalist, Chancellor Reuben Cohen, he treated the captive audience to a lecture on the necessity of working hard, saving money, abandoning hope in social programs, thinking of oneself above all, and helping recession-ridden Canada retain its 'proper' place among the nations of Europe and America, rather than condescend to compete with those upstart Asians.

The performance encapsulated the themes of the political campaign which has filled headlines for weeks now and is rapidly approaching its climax. Between Campbell's nationalism and Cohen's habit, as he handed out degrees, of asking African and Asian (but not US) students if they were "going back there", a xenophobic current was running strong. Even more prominent was the implicit suggestion, which has permeated the entire electoral process this fall, that it is only the 'experts' of society — politicians, businesspeople — who are capable of offering realistic and informed answers to financial problems, and the rest of us should trust them.

It's time to recognize, though, that all three traditional party machines have lost the ability to generate really fresh ideas, and are unable to break from the pattern of making promises they don't intend to keep. We've known that about the Tories for some time. The Liberals won't be any different. The NDP is losing even its protest-vote appeal. And the only new party likely to gain a significant voice in Parliament, Reform, has become the haven for racists, opportunists and proponents of naively simple solutions.

If you do vote on Monday, then, the choice is clear (with apologies to Pepsi): there is none. That's the biggest charade of all.

Ryan Stanley

Erratum: In the October 7 issue of the *Gazette*, an opinion piece by Fraser Matte referred incorrectly to Dalhousie's 'capital campaign'. The correct term is the Annual Fund campaign, for which a formal ten-year goal has not been set.

the Gazette

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Dal's crisis at the top

One of the most important yet misunderstood forces in human society is leadership. This has never been more apparent than in this pre-election period when Canadians have been contemplating their own attitudes toward the quality of leadership and comparing them with the personalities offered on the ballot paper. Unfortunately, despite the fact that lines of communication have never been more direct between the governed and the governing, no sense of where or how we are to be led has emerged.

It is not my wish to provide yet one more definition of what a 'leader' is or should be. I believe that such a definition, if it exists, is irrelevant. Rather, I believe an understanding of the relationship between levels of society (the governed and the governing) and an understanding of some share set of beliefs among these levels will in the end provide the united outlook we require as a society.

This crisis of leadership has not been confined to the federal scene. We at Dalhousie University have witnessed grave imbalances in our own hierarchy. Now, faced as we are with financial troubles that seem to threaten the existence of academia, these irregularities of the past are causing their worst harm yet to the foundation of our academic community. It is surely time for some realignment.

A relationship between the governed and the governing must be based on a foundation of example and trust. A leader must set a specific standard of behaviour, a model relevant to the times and issues. Given a certain amount of trust between the levels of society, this model will take root and allow for decision-making by the leader that does not rely on unilateral decrees but on a collective 'sense of being' derived from the model — a shared set of beliefs, if you will. A leader does not command.

Leadership should be without pretence

Dr. Clark has assumed powers of leadership in the university community. However, he has not assumed the position and its responsibilities as defined above. Throughout his tenure, Dr. Clark has not set a standard of behaviour relevant to our times or the issues we face. In a period of great austerity and 'tough decision-making' the President and the administration have flourished in truly imperial style. Furthermore, in publicly responding to and in making recommendations based upon the Budget Advisory Committee's report, the President has, in effect,

unilaterally decreed the future course of Dalhousie and, as evidenced by the near unanimous outcry by faculty and students, defied the collective 'sense of being' within the Dalhousie community.

Leadership at Dalhousie in 1993 should be without pretence. The frills, the superfluous support staff, the superfluous administrators should be removed. A personal example of restraint should be set. The President and the administration should come to terms with the collective 'sense of being' that has arisen among faculty and students and make it their own. Our cause should be their cause. What is our cause? Our cause is to retain the essential fabric of the university: its academic programs. Our cause is to make Canada a progressive, educated nation. We fear the time when Canadians of means leave the country in search of a higher education while those without means, remain behind. We fear the day when an educated Canadian is one with a British or American education. We fear the day when large sectors of our population remain without an education at all. We fear the recolonization of our nation.

The President and the administration have two choices before them. They can either command or they can lead.

James Calkin



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 MacIntosh or IBM-compatible 3.5" disk.

Culture needed

To the editor:

Dr. Clark is going on October 19 to the Board of Governors of Dalhousie University to ask them to consider the recommendations of the Budget Advisory Committee and his own specific recommendations on program cuts.

As an ordinary citizen of Nova Scotia and as an Alumnus of Dalhousie University, I hope the Board of Governors does not accept Dr. Clark's recommendations. To recommend closing the Dalhousie Art Gallery, the Music Department, the Costume Department, and to gut most of the Library and Information Studies to put what is left into Business Administration is to be deficient in wisdom and leadership. Everyday life in Nova Scotia requires culture and access to information for all our citizens, and Dalhousie University with 80% of its funding from all Nova Scotia taxpayers has as much responsibility to train locally performing artists and information experts as to train doctors, lawyers and business people. People do not live on bread alone; having performing arts and access to information is vital to the dynamics of community life and a viable democracy.

What is the composition of the Budget Advisory Committee, the Board of Governors, and the Senate? Are these bodies mostly represented by doctors, lawyers and business people? If so, surely some of them have the vision to see the importance of music, theatre and access to information with experts trained in each of these disciplines. Are people interested in the performing arts and in Library Studies well represented on these three bodies?

Another distressing note is that Dalhousie University is considering cutting the Indigenous Black and Micmac Program. Considering the history of racism in Nova Scotia, it is not ethical to consider doing such a cut. I presume the Board of Governors and the Senate consider themselves ethical people.

Halifax as a capital city needs to be a cultural centre as well as a centre for doctors, lawyers and business people. Otherwise, Halifax will become a very dismal city in which to live. Cultural reputation is an important consideration when people decide to move to Halifax or Nova Scotia. It not only makes ethical sense to disapprove of Dr. Clark's recommendations: it also makes economic sense.

Hope Bridgewater

War for ideals

To the editor:

Angel Figueroa's emotional diatribe against military arms (*Gazette*, 7 October) fails to note two important points. Firstly, though wars and battles cause human suffering they concomitantly pave the road to freedom. Unfortunately the price of freedom is high. We have experienced 2,000 years of human conflict, yet over the same 2,000 years humankind has progressed and freedom and democracy are no longer merely aspirations, but rather are becoming realities. The Second World War, the Cold War and most recently the Gulf War freed people from tyranny and oppression. These conflicts provided people with freedom. Without fighting for ideals we will be victims of oppressive and malevolent dictators.

Secondly, Angel fails to recognize that aircraft and weapons are not macabre, but rather those who utilize them without just cause should be the focus of our indignation. A gun has no conscious [sic], only the individual who pulls the trigger can be responsible. Unfortunately the only way to defend one's freedom is to take up arms and fight for ideals. Without the weapons to defend ourselves we stand to lose everything in which we believe. My only regret is that our grandfathers did not have the Apache helicopters, B-52s and other technological advantages that we have today. For if they did the wars of the past could have been won with less human sacrifice and misery. Angel must remember that the cost of having weapons is much less than the cost of living without freedom and ideals. A life without freedom is eerie and horrific. Unfortunately Angel and others don't understand.

P. E. James

Coverage unfair

To the editor:

In the middle of an election campaign it is interesting to see what 'democracy' means to different people.

In Halifax any pretense of representation seems to have been totally abandoned. In the past week we have seen three blatant examples of anti-democratic actions.

The Dalhousie Political Science Society organized an in-class all candidates debate on October 4. Despite the fact the ten names will appear on the ballot on October 25 the Poli Sci Society only invited the Tory and Liberal candidates,

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