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LETTERS

...NFCUS Tells All...

In reply to charges by Gazette kibitzer Bob Scammell and contributor Mike Steeves that NFCUS had done both too much and too little on the Hungarian executions issue, national NFCUS President Jacques Gérin wrote the Gazette the following explanatory letter:

Sir, It is a pleasure to read the Gazette these days with so much being written about what NFCUS is or is not doing. This shows a healthy interest in student affairs and is something we would like to see more widespread.

Unfortunately interest is not always equalled by knowledge of facts and I feel I should comment upon two articles which attempted to indicate that we did too much and not enough about the "Hungarian situation"...

While petitions were spontaneously being organized at UBC, Toronto and other universities in revulsion at the mere possibility of such a brutal fate facing fellow students,

Kibitzer's Corner:

Girls In Locker Room Make Showering A Game

By BOB SCAMMELL

the Secretariat requested information from official sources such as the External Affairs Department, the U. S. Embassy in Ottawa, Sir Leslie Munro and the Canadian delegation to the United Nations, and also from Hungarian groups in Ottawa, Montreal and Vancouver.

The Canadian delegation at the UN was most outspoken in pressing for the issue to be tabled on the floor of the General Assembly and in so doing acknowledged repeatedly the concern of the Canadian student community (public declaration by the Hon. Howard Green, and letters to us from His Excellency C. S. A. Ritchie, permanent ambassador to the UN, and Prof. Maxwell Cohen, Canadian delegate to the UN.)

We have never denied our support to the petitions and have encouraged the individual Councils who felt they should protest. But we did not think it fair to Canadian students to venture officially in something for which there was no definite confirmation...

I have before me an official copy of the Munro report sent to the Secretariat following our pressures for the publications of information.

The report notes the continued trials and imprisonments in Hungary since 1956. It strongly blames the Hungarian and USSR Governments for refusing an impartial investigation of the facts but it does by no means confirm the 150 executions alleged by Ed Sullivan.

Publicity was given to the sad state of affairs in Hungary... Secondly the search for information and the official pressures for a pronouncement from the Government which I think we can admit were strongly responsible for the outspoken position our Government has taken.

I believe that in view of the results achieved and the UN resolution we had but three choices. Stick our neck out immediately in violent declarations - propaganda style - and commit the name of the Canadian student in front of the world, all this, mind you, on the word of Mr. Ed Sullivan.

We also could have shied away from the problem under the pretext of "no information". I believe that we acted throughout this case as is expected from the responsible representatives of the student community and gained more through these efforts than could have been achieved otherwise.

Referring to other points mentioned in Mr. Scammell's article, I was pleased to read his disgust at the lack of reaction of Canadian students in front of their problems "at home".

And I was still more pleased because I read this after hearing in some of our universities, "There are no issues! We have nothing to fight for!" Issues have been raised in various parts of the country and on a national scale...

The Sauvé government announced that "statutory grants" would be established in the province of Quebec - it is usually difficult to say "we" were the most important factor in this decision - but it is certainly true in this case. Statutory grants were first requested by the students of the Quebec region as part of the National Education Campaign...

The students - all of us - should be concerned with issues. Not one professional rabble rouser! NFCUS policy is dictated by the students, the NFCUS is the students themselves. So start working at home and then you might complain about others.

The Executive and the Secretariat have always acted in what they felt were the best interests of the student community. We will continue to do so and expect to be informed of what you - all of you, the body of the Federation - think about issues and policies which affect your Federation.

But when you write insure that your case is accurately stated.

Yours very truly, Jacques Gérin, National President.

Recently, while cleaning out one of my drawers, I am finding a miniscule scrap of parchment upon which is scrawled, "Mens' locker room - a female shortcut?"

Now, being a neophyte, I am not cognizant with the more quaint Dalhousie traditions, but the irate citizen who inspires the above squib gives me to understand that the gym is so constructed that coats at musical chairs rehearsals upstairs, who are suddenly deciding to go to the little gym downstairs, are being forced to pass through the mens' locker room to do same.

Naturally I am prepared to believe no such thing, so I hies me forth, bent on interviewing that sterling custodian of the gym, guardian of the beanie concession, compulsive coffee drinker, and veritable tiger at the gates of female virtue - Blottsy.

He is not in the cafeteria, neither is he getting the mail, nor do I find him helping frail college broads up campus steps which are made treacherous in winter by loose boards.

Crossing my fingers, I decide to try his office.

Again I am toddling off, and am entering the back portal of the gym which - as necessary loyal Dalhousian knows - necessitates that I go through the locker room before approaching the lair in which the erstwhile object of my search is said to hold forth.

The locker room is a scene of post-game athletic jollity. Everywhere is the smell of super-healthy young bodies, the sound of husky young voices, and the "splat-splat" of athlete's feet tripping gaily to and from the showers.

Never am I able, however to remember seeing a locker room which is such a boar's nest of activity. The boys seem slightly more than somewhat eager to divest themselves of their vestments. I am hit in the mouth with a tepid sweatsock just as I enter; the air is aflutter with sweatshirts, the lettering of which proclaims everything from Bryn Mawr to the Wyatt Earp fan club; everywhere twong pouches are very much in evidence. So frantic are the efforts of the boys as they strive to get into a state of deshabille, that I am reminded of the night Coconut Eddy inserts itching powder into the G-strings of the Broadway Burlesque.

But with customary sang-fraud, I am perambulating toward the stairs.

There, with one foot in ozone, preparing to plop it on the bottom step, I am met by a gaggle of Dalhousie's finest broads - all at the top of the steps - and looking volumpuous, to say the least, in assorted shorts and black long underwear.

"Oh nertz," growls one particularly petite number, "there's always gotta be one with his clothes on!"

Flushed with shame, I am wheezing up the stairs amid sundry cat-calls hoots, and jeers:

- "Proud!"
"Ya queer or sumthin'?"
"Sticky wicket!"
"Party Pooper!"

As I am elbowing my way through the mob, one screams, Aw fergit him gals, he's just a little jerk." Then, down the stairwell she screams, "Dressed or not, ya must be caught - Charge, girls!"

And down they do charge, to a tune of guffaws and masculine "tee-hees."

But I am doomed to disappointment. For though I am scratching and whimpering at my door for two hours, I do not get my interview. Blottsy is not in.

(Editor's note: Flush and other Toronto tabloids: Please copy.)

THE RIGHTS OF CRITICISM

We of the Dalhousie Gazette feel that it is about time we took a hard look at this university of ours and the students in it. In recent issues we have been little short of amazed to find that student fire has been directed, in most cases, not at the truth or error of our statements, but at our utter audacity in criticizing politicians and long-established organizations. That the thinking of university students should have taken this tack seems to us incredible.

We hardly need to elaborate here upon the value of criticism, but we would point out that it is only through continual examination and censure that institutions - be they persons, universities or governments - may be motivated to keep their vitality and adaptability. We suggest that the university newspaper is one of the very few agencies which has unrestrained power to criticize, for it remains independent of owners, financiers or advertisers who would checkrein its policies.

Politics is not a sacred cow.

Yet it seems sadly apparent that people in North America have the idea that politics is a mysterious, complicated and devious game played by a number of dedicated experts, and that to criticize these people is to trespass upon sacred ground. In Europe the situation is decidedly different; politics is everybody's worry, and the man on the street is as enthusiastically involved in governmental issues as the political hierarchy itself.

The university student in Paris or Hamburg can discuss intelligently both national and international issues. But in Canada only a tiny percentage of university students can even tell you the difference between a Liberal and a Conservative.

Instead there is the childlike faith in the elected representatives, a "hands-off" attitude toward people of one's own political party or of elected persons who are supposedly too important to be criticized. The result of this approach can be only one thing: apathy. And that is what we have in our universities at the moment. In Canada it appears that university students wish to be spoon-fed their politics along with their academic courses.

In Canadian politics it has become apparent that as long as citizens don't want to think about politics, reason may be easily subordinated to emotion. So the "hurrah-for-the-Great-Dominion-of-the-North", sentimental

approach is fast catching fire as a ticket to success in politics. But there must always be people capable of, and interested in, sifting, intelligently, the reason from all the chaff, and it would seem that those best able to perform that function are those trained in the art of thought and analysis - those trained, in effect, in universities.

Therefore we feel it significant that so many of our critics, university students all, have carefully labelled our criticism "bad taste". What, after all, is bad taste? As far as we can tell, it seems to comprise a catch-all phrase under which passive readers may hide their emotional, rather than rational, arguments for the maintenance of the peaceful political status quo. It is our opinion, however, that this so-called "bad taste" writing is merely the employment of our rightful freedom to criticize and question within the bounds of moral ethics and legal limitation.

There is a claim that it isn't fair for the Gazette to enter politics in any way because it is a monopoly newspaper on the campus and therefore allows opposition no medium in which to express its views. This amounts to saying that we have the right to express an opinion upon any subject except that of politics; that is, that the rights of politicians are sacred and inalienable. If ours be a true democracy, then nothing could be farther from the truth.

We have always given prominent position to articles and letters in answer to editorial matter in the Gazette, and will continue that policy.

If students take an active interest in politics while at university, it is a sure sign that they will continue to do so after graduation. It is about time our universities began producing people who have at least a slight grasp of political issues and policies, people who aren't afraid to speak when the ridiculous, the wasteful, or merely the wrong, shows up in government.

We will be in error only when what we print is untrue. If we are shown to have been mistaken in our editorial or other comment, we will indeed attempt to correct our errors. Otherwise there is room for neither apology nor regret.

Dalhousie is typical of the blissful unconsciousness of the Canadian student toward politics and national issues. To her we say: Wake up, or else face the decline of democracy.