

opinions

Smalltown boy goes to Montreal

I've told everyone else so I might as well tell you: I went to Montreal for the Thanksgiving long weekend. It was the first time I've been there. It's big. Damn big.

This sentiment betrays the fact that I spent my formative years in a Prairie city of 650,000 people. To see a city five times that size, crowded on an island, is a cultural adventure.

In Western Canada, horizontal space is not a constraint on development (with the obvious exception of Hongcouver). Rather than building up, we build out: houses longer and wider than they are high; broad, semi-high office buildings and hotels which seem tall because the only other structures in the province above forty stories are the grain el-

evators located two hours out of town.

So I spent several days on such streets as Ste. Catherine, Crescent, Peel and Maisonneuve, looking straight up. Montreal, for those of you who have yet to visit, also has serious fashion sense. Men wear three-pieces, not two-pieces, and women, particularly the middle-aged ones, look upscale, if not downright glamorous. Only those under the age of thirty may wear jeans, and for ripped or patched denims, keep on searching.

Amid glass and concrete towers, cars and people choke the pavement at all hours of the day, not only during the hellish rush hours (notice the plural form of 'hour!'). Delis with their inimitable smoked meat

plates and jars of deliciously sour kosher dills, abound. Amusement centres offering video/pinball delights downstairs and 24-hour peepshows upstairs - amazing what a couple of quarters can still buy. Oh yes, and stores that are open on Sunday, even Thanksgiving Monday.

Drive west from downtown and gawk at the houses in Westmount and Hampstead, the wealthiest neighbourhoods in Canada according to per capita income statistics. These houses, with their stone walls, iron gates, fountains and climbing vines, possess something which eludes the sprawling pre-fab structures in Toronto and Vancouver: History.

Like Halifax, Montreal is a port

city with many of the country's oldest institutions, be they hospitals, cathedrals or schools. However, it has continually upgraded itself, keeping pace with the new industries, businesses and socioeconomic trends. Its downtown core has grown into the chaotic smorgasbord of commerce and conveniences associated with any big city, while ethnocultural neighbourhoods (St. Hubert, Park X) and outlying suburbs (West Island, South Shore) have grown identities and amenities of their own.

Visitors to my hometown are always impressed by the variety of cultures which thrive in a city populated by less than a million people - Italian, Greek, Portuguese, Ukrainian, Vietnamese, Chinese, French and German, among others.

In a similar fashion, the sheer scale of the ethnic diversity in Montreal impressed me. No matter what your heritage, you'll spot just enough kinfolk on the street to feel at home, while never losing sight of the fact

that you're in a Canadian city. The extensive cultural scene, in both the ethnic and artistic sense, is yet another facet of Montreal which makes the whole greater than simply the sum of its varied parts.

Having said all this, I can't argue with the claim that Quebec is distinct from the other provinces of Canada. Certainly, every province is distinct in its own physical and human landscape. But the European influence prevalent in Montreal's architecture and lifestyle is just one of the characteristics of Quebec which is shared by no other province. Consider values or voting patterns: there are far more similarities between B.C. and Alberta, or Nova Scotia and P.E.I., than there are between Quebec and Ontario or New Brunswick.

Despite this - in fact, because of this, it would be a great loss for the country if we were to lose *la belle*

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DSU lacks leadership on CFS issue

As a first year Dalhousie student, I would like to add a different perspective to the CFS debate. I am prompted by the editorial, *Referendum? What Referendum?* by Lilli Ju, which appeared in the last issue of the Gazette (October 6, 1994).

I feel that there was more involved than just the issue of CFS membership fee increase; it really has to do with the lack of leadership exercised by the DSU Executives. Unfortunately, instead of addressing the real issues, the whole debate of membership in a national student organization has been focused on the proposed increase of membership fees. I don't want to debate the specific merit of the CFS, but it really comes down to one issue. If the result of the referendum is no, who will lobby the government to repeal the proposed 2.9 billion dollar cuts to post secondary institutions? Hal Maclean would have us believe that during the five weeks of "consultations" on the social reform package, there is enough time to establish another national organization to lead the lobby on behalf of Dal against the proposed cuts to post-secondary education.

If the actions of the DSU since the announcement of the cuts are any indication as to how aggressively they will lobby the government, I am really concerned as to if Dalhousie will have a voice in protest to the social reform cuts. Just ask yourself, what statements has the DSU made in response to the social reform package? Am I to assume that the 2.9 billion dollar cuts will not affect Dal, and if not, why hasn't our DSU Executives taken action?

Lilli Ju raised the issue of apathy, and one thing that comes to mind on this issue is the general lack of information about the DSU. At registration for Frosh Week, I purchased a Frosh Pack and among the \$5 coupons for Kara's Hair Studio, the Metro Transit Park and Ride pamphlet and, of course, the condom, was the Guide to Student Services. On page 14 of the Guide, listed under Student Organizations and Societies, were three paragraphs that vaguely described the role of the Student Union. So little information about an organization I had paid \$141.00 to join, and whose mandate is to "Act as the official organization of the Students of the University" (preamble to the DSU Constitution).

There was also no information on the Canadian Federation of Students, of which virtually all first year students (including myself) had never heard but paid CFS memberships nonetheless. The result is that first year students have not been informed about their rights as members of the DSU or the CFS, which means that it is easier to persuade people to the "NO" side by turning the whole issue into a matter of saving six bucks.

Lilli Ju said in her editorial, "Taking into account the general level of apathy...". I guess this is another attempt to place the blame for general lack of interest in the DSU on the students, when in fact the DSU Executives have created the present climate that is oh so favourable for the development of apathy. When there is apathy in an organization it is caused by the lack of information given to its membership by the executive...Sound familiar? The DSU should begin to take their responsibility of informing students of issues concerning post secondary education.

I want to believe that the Student Union did not intentionally with-

hold membership information about CFS from first year students, but it is becoming increasingly difficult to convince myself of this. I can understand that the Student Union might want to advertise its agenda, namely withdrawal from CFS, but the Student Union should not lose sight of its need to remain relevant and accountable to its membership.

Regardless of what the referendum results are, we the students of Dalhousie are going to have to begin lobbying the government against the cuts to post-secondary education. The DSU Executives are obviously more intent on the operation of the DSU Inc. than they are on providing talented and aggressive leadership to save the accessibility and quality of Canadian post-secondary institutions.

The proposed cuts to university funding are the largest in over fifty years, and in the midst of what could be a turning point in Canadian post-secondary education as we know it, I have to ask...WHERE'S THE LEADERSHIP?

Aaron Poirier

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Interested in helping to plan Week of Reflection, a national week of remembrance and action on violence against women?

Please call Lisa at the DWC.

♀ ♀ ♀ ♀ ♀ ♀

October 25, 7:00 p.m.
Black Womanist Thought and Community Development with Lana MacLean.

October 26, 7:00 p.m.
Her Tongue on my Theory.
A multimedia presentation co-sponsored by the DWC at The Grawood.

October 26-30
Women's Reellife Film and Video Festival.
See the DWC sponsored film "Dialogues with Mad Women".

