

DAGS and council simply shouting

Occasionally an Issue comes up at Dalhousie which at least superficially seems clear cut and simple. The present DAGS (Dalhousie Assoc. of Graduate Students) - Student Union confrontation is just such an issue. It appears relatively simple - either DAGS should get its money or it shouldn't - but is in fact far more complex when given more than a cursory glance.

Both side of the disagreement have valid points in their favour and by the same token both have at times acted unreasonably and said things that should never have been said. About all that is clear right at the moment is that both sides should continue discussion and before DAGS takes the ultimate step of secession from the Union perhaps the idea of an outside arbitrator - unbiased towards either side - should be considered.

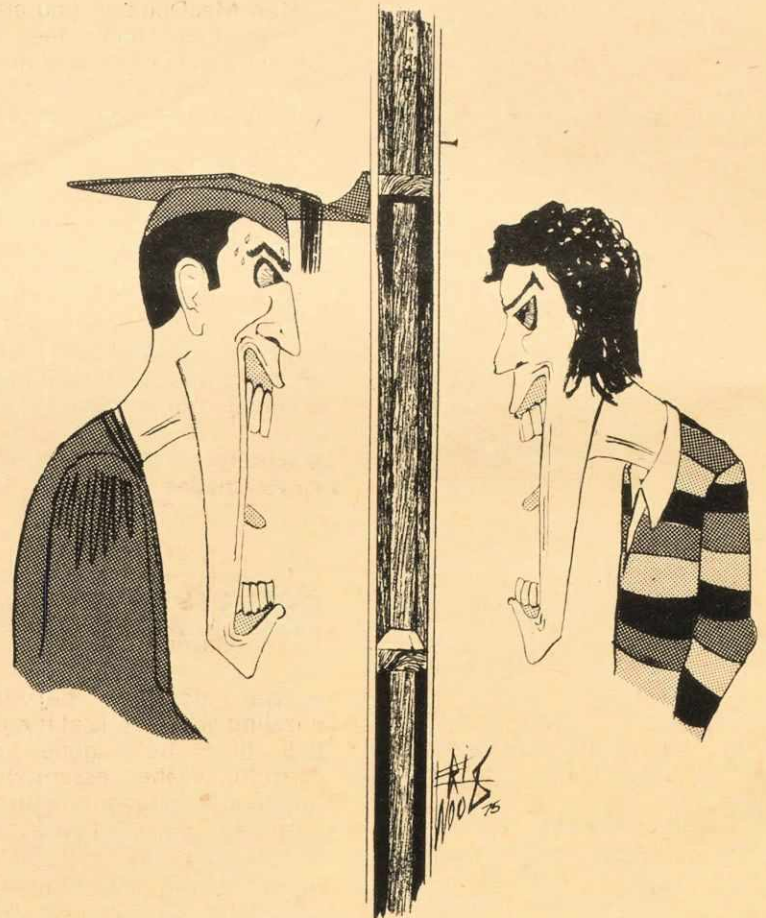
Though the confrontation at least began over financial issues it appears to go much deeper. It seems that whether they know it or not the graduate students have brought up questions about the very structure of the Student Union. The graduate students have asked for a larger return of their support union fees in order to carry out programs beneficial to their society's members but without council control.

This is really not an unreasonable demand in many ways. There doesn't seem to be much point served by making the grad students crawl for money to the students' council - a council that is composed predominantly of undergraduate students with little understanding of the needs and desires of the older student population. Of course the Union side of the argument - that they are ultimately responsible to the whole student body for the expenditure of student monies - is also a valid point. Perhaps the reinstatement of a Treasury Board is the answer to this problem. A Treasury Board could oversee how student monies are used but would not be responsible for determining lump sums or grants issued to societies at the beginning of each year. The Council could make arrangements to provide DAGS, and possibly other large societies catering to the needs of special interest groups on campus with a lump sum of money out of their fees. DAGS would not have to go to the Grants committee and rationalize how they wish to spend this money but could dispose of it as they wish - provided that the Treasury Board sees no abuses occurring.

The decentralization of the Student Union in terms of finances and power is not a bad thing. The grad students want decentralization and the Student Union with them - at least in principle. An area of decentralization that DAGS can easily handle and which they are now involved in is academic affairs. DAGS provides its members with an academic affairs committee which deals only with those issues affecting graduate students. This is obviously a good thing. Further, the grad students are questioning the effectiveness and necessity of an Academic Affairs secretariat within the Union.

Perhaps a closer look at several other Union secretariats is now in order and abolishment of at least two should be considered. Abolishment of two or three secretariats would save the Union money - money that could be well spent elsewhere. If DAGS is truly interested in both its students and the preservation of the union as it claims it might be a better idea for them to provide the leadership necessary to reassess the present Union structure instead of polling their members about secession from the Union.

The threat of one group seceding from the Union is not a new or original phenomenon at Dalhousie. Every few years one group or another makes demands on the Union and if the demands are not met the group threatens secession. Unfortunately the very



threat of secession tends to cloud the real issues behind the groups dissatisfaction with the Student Union. The present confrontation is no exception. The grad students still see secession as a last resort - they are not rushing out to hold a referendum just for kicks. They have very real grievances which should be aired and cleared up.

The Student Union is willing to listen to reasonable grievances and take some action to correct them but the Union does not like being backed into a corner and this appears to be what DAGS is doing. Secession, when used as a weapon, accomplishes only one thing - it puts the Union on the defensive and the executive cannot objectively listen and act on a group's grievances.

The grad students compose one seventh of the Union membership and are one of the largest groups on campus. Dissatisfaction with the Union can be used as an important tool for change when such a large and well informed group is involved. However the tool can be blunted and rendered useless in the midst of heated and emotional debate. Further discussion handled in a calm, cool, and objective atmosphere is what is needed now - not threats of secession and court action. The Union has set up a committee to examine DAGS' grievances but the usefulness of this committee will be jeopardized if it is not given the time it needs to consider carefully and objectively the problems raised by the grad students. The committee members must find solutions to the problems they are faced with but this will be difficult to do if the threat of secession is being used as a time bomb, ticking away in the room with them.



Letters

Smell the crap

To the Gazette,

I am writing in reply to the "thing" called Ken MacDougall who wrote a letter to the Editor of the Dalhousie Gazette on 6/11/75. After deep contemplation of wheth-

er to allow sleeping dogs to lie or not, I decided that some people should not be allowed to go on in life in a state of dis-illusionment.

Regarding Ken's letter, firstly many of his facts were quite wrong and even contradictory. For in his letter he wrote "Mr. Chadee has
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