

Berton says

'March in the streets'

by Glenn Walton

Convocations are always an opportunity for solemn ceremony and dressup not to mention hyperbole. It was refreshing then, to hear author Pierre Berton, at this year's Fall Convocation bluster on about the War Measures and Official Secrets Act, book banners, the RCMP, and Bill 101.

In keeping with his customary outspokenness Berton chose students apathy in the face of growing authoritarianism as the subject of his address. The "journalist, historian, entertainer and passionate nationalist" could not have chosen an audience more in need of his words.

He warned of a general trend in western society towards authoritarianism, a tendency that students, traditionally in the vanguard of liberalism and protest throughout history, should be "marching in the streets" against. Tellingly, only his discussion of minority language rights in Quebec elicited much reaction from the audience, probably for the wrong reasons. Book-banning, mail opening, and phone-tapping were spectacles that passed with ne'er a murmur from the rows of well-dressed citizens. Only the name Levesque was able to stir the tribal spirit to any sort of fervor.

Bill 101 is in any case an emotional issue, open to interpretation; and anyone commenting on it nowadays is easily misunderstood. Berton, while acknowledging the right of French Canadians to use their own language, condemned the move to ban anything but the use of French in Quebec. He personally had confronted the PQ leader on the matter, he said, and was told that it was being re-interpreted. "I don't like laws that can be re-interpreted by politicians," he concluded.

Most disturbing of all in his speech was his pointing out of the fact that government and bureaucrats in Canada are now using phrases such as "executive privilege" and "national security", catch phrases of the Watergate cover-up. He noted that Canada has no Freedom of Information Act, a law that in

the US, has enabled private citizens to sue the government and uncover misdoings by such agencies as the CIA. "Such an act has been proposed in Canada" he said. "It will be a farce and a joke if civil servants and politicians are left to decide upon it. The legislation should be brought before an independent member of the judiciary, who can make a decision free of political biases."

Throughout, the graduates in their black robes listened respectfully. In light of the speaker's remarks on authori-

tarianism it was interesting to note that not one of the three hundred and some odd students defied the formal dress code of the occasion. Perhaps this is altogether fitting. Convocations are symbolic affairs, and graduating students are inevitable reminded that they are about to enter "real" society, whatever that may be, which all too often translates into a job and financial security, with its implicit conformity to often archaic and repressive norms. Thus it is no coincidence that that passing is done in uniform.

FONS or FUNSS

Student representatives from post-secondary institutions across the province will be meeting at Dalhousie this weekend to discuss plans for a provincial student organization. The organization will be formed to succeed the Atlantic Federation of Students (AFS), which will be officially disbanded on November 4.

In a special meeting held last Sunday Dal Student Council discussed proposals for the new provincial organization. Dalhousie's position on the matter will be presented by a council committee consisting of Dick Matthews, Mike Power, Jim Prentice, and Denise Soucy-Roberge.

The proposal being put forth by Dalhousie is one for an organization whose membership would be open to any post-secondary institution in Nova Scotia. Each institution must hold a referendum of its students to join or withdraw from the organization. Funding would come from a per capita fee of \$1.50.

The increase of 50 cents over the previous per capita fee set by the AFS would be necessary to sustain the operation of a Nova Scotia based organization, whose potential total membership would be around 20,000 students.

Dalhousie is also recommending that there be a five person executive as well as a

fulltime staffperson. This executive structure would allow for greater division of labour than was possible under the AFS structure.

The on-going work of the organization would be carried out by standing committees. Committees would also be set up on each campus to act as liaisons and organizers between the executive, the council, and the students. Dal will suggest that the campus committees be composed of three council members, one of whom is an executive of the council, and two members at large. However, the actual structure of the committees will probably vary from campus to campus.

Although Dalhousie students will comprise a large proportion of the membership of the organization and will thus contribute a large part of its funding, Dal is proposing that each institution have one vote at the meetings. This would insure that Dal and a few other large schools do not dominate the organization to the extent that smaller schools have no control over its activities.

Some suggested names for the organization are Student Association of Nova Scotia (SANS), Student Union of Nova Scotia (SUNS), Federation of Nova Scotia Students (FONSS), and Federated Union of Nova Scotia Students (FUNSS).



Self-preservation

by Ron Norman

Sociobiology is one of those movements for the encouragement of little-known instincts (e.g. aggressivity, territory). Sociobiologists believe in genes. They've replaced the Darwinian urge to preserve oneself with a fundamental drive to propagate all the genes in one's chromosomes. They even talk as if it is genes that have the instinct of self-preservation.

Robert Trivers made his name as a sociobiologist, and that was why he was invited to deliver a Dorothy Killam lecture last Wednesday evening. But he hardly even alluded to the peculiar doctrines of his school.

He started out with a slide-show about natural selection. He went on about pelicans and moths, but one knew he was talking about us. For example, he pointed out that young pelicans have temper tantrums just like babies, and he found that rather odd since pelicans are so far from us biologically. He seemed to think that every human action is controlled by a gene and that we are no more versatile than ants.

Notably he said that "Utopias" cannot work because thousands of years have left us with exploiter-genes which we cannot get rid of. He said this without blinking an eye.

A scientific education is a wonderful thing. He expresses a complete indifference to the past, so it would be useless to tell him that social systems have changed radically without any great turnover of genes. The settlement of peoples on farms after hundreds of thousands of years of a hunting life would be a

miracle in the Trivers system. But it happened at the beginning of the Neolithic age.

It is not just that social revolution is a genetic no-no, Trivers goes on to console the oppressed, by telling them that they are cornering all the good sturdy genes while the higher ups are going to the bad.

He wound up by telling us that he believes in God—a biological God referred to as Him or Her. He refuses to content himself with the random confusion which presents itself to his highly-trained mind without God.



I thought it was a most extraordinary performance, but then I never watch television, and I have never been to a popular lecture before. The rest of the audience took to it like ducks to imprinting. Perhaps they compared it to those articles in the Reader's Digest entitled, e.g. "The Amazing Armadillo—a romp through the fields of knowledge, culling curious facts."

He did not go into the interesting question of how many genes can dance on the head of a pin.



A broken water main caused severe flooding in the basement of the Killam Library which in turn left the Chemistry building and Howe Hall without lights on Friday and early Saturday morning. Library staff report that no extensive or serious damage resulted although it took time for the machinery to dry out.