

The Chronicle Herald picks a fight at Auburn High

On Monday, March 3rd, the Chronicle Herald and Mail Star ran an article headlined "Parents Unite Behind Black Students at Auburn Drive." The piece detailed complaints by an association of black parents about the nature of race relations at Auburn Drive High School in Cole Harbour.

In the two days following the publication of the article, there were a series of racial fights. Much as the Herald and its editors would like to deny it, that article caused those fights.

"It [the article] was very one sided...these people took it upon themselves to talk to the reporter," said Shelley Banks, the student council president at Auburn Drive High School.

"It made black students question the way white people felt about them," said Banks.

The article ran in both the Herald and the Mail-Star as the lead story on the front page. In the first nine paragraphs it mentions the "repression" of a black student's essay written to celebrate African Heritage Month.

A parent cited in the article, whose daughter has not attended the school in two years, complained that when his child was suspended in 1994, the school's principal was uncooperative.

By the tenth paragraph, Sherri Borden, the Herald reporter who wrote the piece, finally mentioned that there are student support workers at the school trying to address problems students may have — including those pertaining to race issues.

Auburn High principal Don Buck — the same principal referred to earlier — is quoted in the article as saying he couldn't confirm or deny whether the school had a race problem.

"How would you answer that in society? Is there a problem with racism in society? We're a society...we're not trying to hide anything and I'm not trying to

hide anything," said Buck. This was the only quote from the principal printed by the Herald.

From that point forward, the article contained only accusations and inferences that went completely unquestioned by the reporter. All of these accusations directly needed to be questioned and would have been by a reporter who was not practicing shoddy, sensationalistic journalism. Borden was, and after the first day of fights she called the school to apologize for her irresponsible reporting.

One parent is quoted in the article as saying the school is hostile to black students because "the climate is such that the students that live around the school [act like] it's their community and everyone else is just visiting." That would include most of the rest of the school's population that also have to be bussed in, white and black, a fact that is not mentioned by Borden.

The article's most ridiculous, unquestioned claim is that the basketball team does not have enough black students on it. Black representation on the team is currently at one-third. The black population of the school is about one tenth of the total student population. How can this ratio be construed as being unfair? And more to the point, why did Borden include such a useless fact in the article, if not to satisfy an agenda?

Buck was either not asked to respond to the specific allegations, or his responses were not printed. Other than (quite rightly) pointing out that it was not possible to say if Auburn had a racial problem beyond that already pervasive in society, Buck was not quoted on the basketball team, the "repressed" essay or the suspended student.

When specific accusations are made against an individual in print, that individual should be given the opportunity to respond, or not respond to those allega-

tions. If they do not respond, it should at least be made clear that they were asked.

If Buck had been asked, he may have been able to clear up the issue of the "repressed" essay. Though willing to use such inflammatory terms as repressed, Borden does not at any point attempt to explain the content of the essay and why it was not used by the school's administration.

"It would have stirred up problems with the students," said Banks, adding that the essay was considered inappropriate by the administration.

Maybe Borden wasn't able to find out, but I wouldn't want to accuse her of further journalistic incompetence. Perhaps she knew, and didn't want to write it because it wasn't as good a story as saying that another Cole Harbour school is a cesspool of racial tension.

Perhaps she found out that the essay, which was supposed to be about African Heritage month — a month celebrating the accomplishments of the black community — was in fact something else entirely, and unsuitable to be presented in that context. Perhaps she knew this. Maybe she even asked Buck. But she didn't print it.

Worse, maybe she never bothered to find out.

But when a group of students, perhaps having read about the supposed racism that had been reported fully and impartially in their trusted local daily, assault a student in a school washroom, it isn't the Herald's fault. When the authoritarian and bigoted principal gets knocked down in the ensuing brawl, the Herald's coverage of the school had nothing to do with it.

In fact, it just goes to show that they were right all along.

MARK REYNOLDS

letters

Budget response

Thanks to Gina Stack and Jim Delaney for their competent coverage of the federal and alternative budgets.

I would like to correct Ms. Stack's statement that the Canadian Federation of Students has not addressed the implicit problems with income contingent loan repayment plans. In fact, the problem mentioned by Ms. Stack, that of interest accruing more over time for lower-income graduates with lower payment amounts, has been CFS' main argument against their implementation since the concept's inception in the Axworthy report.

It is amusing, although predictable, that the two organizations mentioned are both taking credit for Mr. Martin's budget measures in favour of students. I invite anyone interested to read the draft recommendations from the House of Commons stand-

ing sub-committee on finance, to Mr. Martin. The truth will be apparent.

A recent article in the Gazette mentioned the announcement of a national CASA "campaign to increase federal funding to post-secondary education" two or three weeks before the federal budget document was scheduled for release, and after the sub-committee had finished its deliberations. It is also interesting to note the date of announcement of the comprehensive campaign pursued by CFS this year: May 1996.

I wonder whose campaign got results?

Jessica Squires

President, Student Union of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design
National Executive Representative,
Canadian Federation of Students-Nova Scotia

Jiggin' the Lydon

BY NICOLE HEFFERNAN, DEIDRE MACKEY, KERRY O'REILLY,
AND LAURA POWER

After hearing about the derogatory Newfoundland joke told by Chris Lydon (our prominent upcoming DSU presidential candidate) at this year's annual Charity Ball, a group of us discussed how exactly to react to such a degrading act, being Dalhousie students and Newfoundlanders. We decided that the best way to get our point across would be to write a little "ditty", as we call it in Newfoundland, and dedicate it to the wonderful Mr. Lydon.

To the tune of *Squid Jiggin' Ground*:

Oh, Dal is that place that we proud Newfoundlanders
Have chosen, our life studies now to pursue,
We like our surroundings,
we're getting good groundings,
But we have a BEEF that we'd like to tell you.

Look back for a moment when Chris had his party,
And asked everyone who could run, walk or crawl,
He had an AGENDA, besides being a friend-a,
With his free wine and beer before Charity Ball.

Now Chris is ambitious and rather auspicious,
As VP of this and yes, VP of that,
But don't hold your breath
while you're waiting for Chrissy
To give what he's promised — he's nothing but slack.

If ever our Chrissy takes YOU out for breakfast
Or while he's campaigning asks you out to Brunch,
He's only brown-nosing, your vote he's proposing,
He's a new definition for: "HE'S OUT TO LUNCH."

Now let me get right to the BEEF that we have Chris,
Insulting the souls of dear Newfoundland's PRIDE,
When you told your jokes
With your "F" words all scattered,
Did it matter to you WE were dying inside?

We know that you think you're God's GIFT to
Dalhousie,
but we think you should be ashamed of your DIRT!
Go do a few courses, access good resources,
'Twill help you improve your "INTELLIGENCE GIRTH".

Now take some advice from intelligent Newfies
Respect other people, inside we're the same,
Don't USE, don't ABUSE,
Just remember the "PERSON",
You'll THEN have a chance to reach FORTUNE
and FAME.

Lovingly composed by a PROUD group
of NEWFoundlanders

the Dalhousie Gazette editorialboard

Managing Editor Shelley Robinson **Copy Editor** Tim Covert
News Gina Stack **Arts** Andrew Simpson & John Cullen
Sports Aaron Bleasdale **Opinions** Michael Alves
Focus on Dal Kaveri Gupta & Tamara Bond **Dalendar** Sophia Maxwell
CUP Editor Mark Reynolds **Photography** Danielle Boudreau
Science & Environment Adel Iskander & Anthony Skelton
Online Manager Daniel Clark **Office Manager** Natalie MacLellan
Art Director Peter Ross **Ad Manager** Amit Batra

Vol. 129 / No. 20

Student Union Building, Dalhousie
University, 6136 University Ave, rm
312, Halifax, NS, B3H 4J2
editorial tel. 902 / 494-2507
fax 902 / 494-1280
<http://is2.dal.ca/~gazette/home.html>
e-mail GAZETTE@is2.dal.ca

For advertising information,
call 494-6532 or visit our ad
manager, 9am to 5pm daily.

The Gazette welcomes letters
to the editor and commentary.
All letters will be printed up to four
per week. The printing of additional
letters will be at the discretion
of the Opinions Editor.

Letters may be edited for length
above 300 words and we reserve the
right to edit commentary.

All submissions must be typed
double-spaced on paper, e-mailed, or
on a Mac or IBM 3 1/2 inch disk, in a
WP version not greater than
Word 6.0 or equivalent.
The deadline is Mondays at 4:30 p.m.

contributors

Rahul Krishnan, Greg Bak, Jeremiah Hiers, Jessica Squires,
Jason Morrison, Khrista Boylan, Nicole Heffernan, Deidre Mackey,
Kerry O'Reilly, Laura Power, Aian LeBlanc, Brooks Kind, Ken Smith,
Nik Madan, Monica Gillis, Andrew Cook, Eugenia Bayada,
Carmen Tam, Jeanne Ju, Erin-Lawless, Deah Sutton, and
Simon Sutton

Founded in 1869 at Dalhousie College, the Gazette is Canada's oldest student newspaper. With a circulation of 10,000, the Gazette is published every Thursday by the Dalhousie Gazette Publishing Society, of which all students of Dalhousie University are members. The Gazette exercises full editorial autonomy and reserves the right to refuse or edit any material submitted. All editorial decisions are made collectively by the staff. To become voting staff members, individuals must contribute to three issues. Views expressed in the Gazette are not necessarily those of the editors or the collective staff. Unless otherwise noted, all text © 1997 the Dalhousie Gazette Publishing Society. ISSN 0011-5819

97