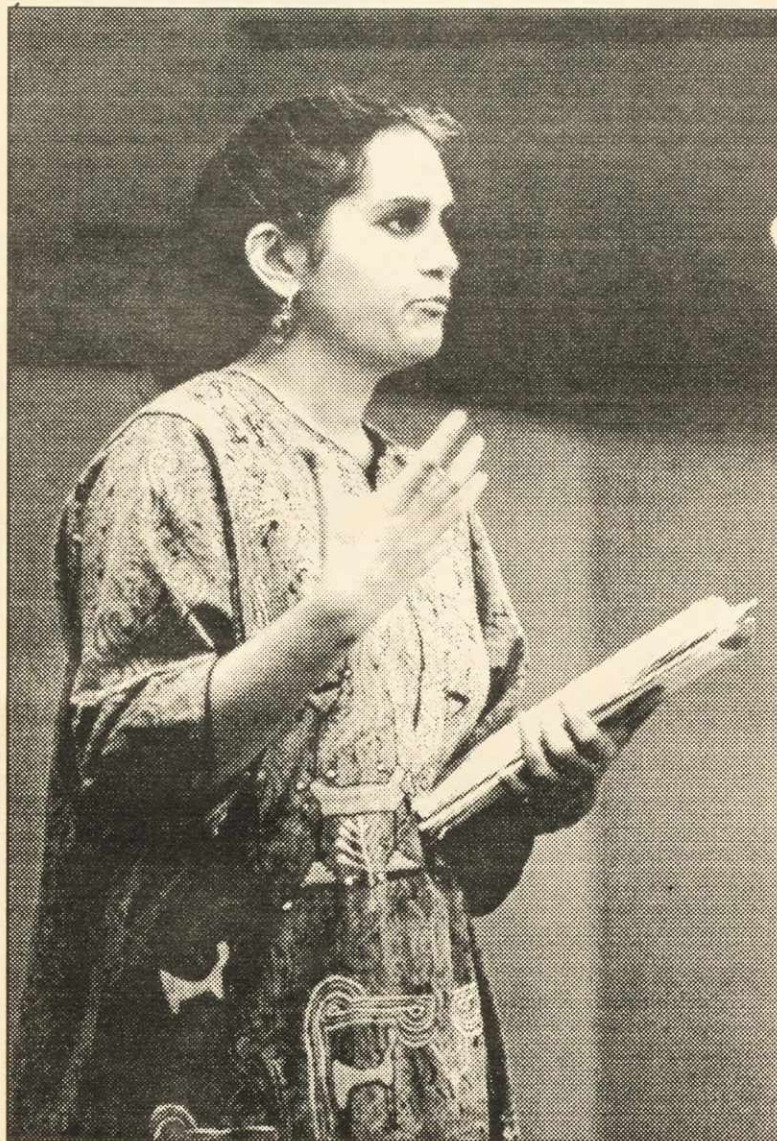


Thobani urges action, collectivity



Sunera Thobani, a leading Canadian feminist, spoke to a rapt Dal audience

BoG decision returns Cohen, angers students

by Julie Sims

In a move that has left some Dalhousie student representatives surprised and unimpressed, the university's Board of Governors (BoG) voted to reappoint Reuben Cohen as chancellor for one more year at its June meeting. Controversy arose around Cohen's role as chancellor as a result of comments he made at a convocation ceremony in May of 1992. Cohen performs a ceremonial function at graduation ceremonies, and on this occasion used the opportunity to address students individually as they were awarded their degrees.

A motion passed by the Dalhousie Student Union (DSU) Council on June 17, 1992 states that Cohen's comments were of an "inappropriately personal, gender-related, and sexual orientation nature".

Later, at a meeting with the Executive of the Council to discuss the controversy, Cohen made several remarks which several student representatives found insulting, such as the contention that "gays" should be called "sads", and that his critics were "disturbed" people.

Last year Chancellor Cohen's resignation was demanded by the Bisexual, Gay, and Lesbian Association of Dalhousie (B-GLAD!). Due to the fact that Cohen's term was almost over, matters were allowed to drop.

Cohen was reappointed until June 30, 1994, to serve until Sir Graham Day, appointed Cohen's successor at the June BoG meeting, takes over.

Many people are disturbed and offended by his reappointment. "An

education institute should provide an environment conducive to learning," says Anthony Roberts, last year's B-GLAD! representative on Council. "Is it possible to foster and nurture such an environment with a homophobic, heterosexist, misogynist, oppressive representative of our university in such a position of power?"

Others are more concerned about the secrecy surrounding Cohen's reappointment. Student representatives on the BoG had no prior warning that the subject of Cohen's reappointment would be discussed at the meeting. A last-minute agenda change left them unprepared to express any objections the two student reps present might have had.

Jeff Rappell, DSU President, did not appreciate "the way it was done." If supporters of Cohen's reappointment had come to the student representatives beforehand, he said, the matter would have been taken to Council, where there would have been an "informed discussion."

"It was quite a setback for the students to have been left out so early on in the school year," says Rappell. He said his agenda as a representative of students emphasizes accessibility, which he said must work both ways between the student and the administrators.

"It wasn't so much what he [Cohen] had done or said in the past," says Rappell, since there have been no complaints about Cohen's behaviour at the 1993 convocation. The problem was purely "procedural."

by Meg Murphy

"People were touched by her, people were moved by her. Many students were really into political activism through her and continued to work in that line since." Sunera Thobani, the President of the National Action Committee on the Status of Women, received these praises from a fellow colleague at Evergreen State College. On Sunday, September 19th, Thobani was here, proving she deserves them. Thobani spoke at Henson College, encouraging all students to take an active role in determining the future of Canadian society.

Of course, a four hour appearance at Henson was not the only event to which this NAC President devoted her Sunday afternoon. As if being the President of an umbrella feminist organization of 550 member groups with 750,000 members is not enough, Thobani is also personally committed to freeing students from the shackles of conservative ideology. In this interview, Thobani directly appeals to Dalhousie students, asking us to open our eyes and view the injustices in Canadian society. Then, to do something about it.

Meg: In this interview, what is the most crucial, overall idea you wish to impress on Dalhousie readers?

Thobani: Collectivity. We are being taught today that it is everybody for themselves...the whole conservative ideology that people don't have the time to look after the less fortunate. It is too expensive. This is wrong. I would like to counter it with some notion of collectivity...I think that young people today have a great role in recognizing that our quality of life is a collective matter. It is something we should all be concerned about, we all have to live together in a society we hold. Equality is a value we should hang onto.

M: Equality for women, or feminism, has been held back on our campus due to the distorted perceptions many students have surrounding it. Male and female students are cautious of supporting a cause which has become synonymous with male-bashing in the minds of many students. Could you please give students a brief description of what feminism means to you, a strong feminist leader, along with the attitude you think the woman's movement has towards males.

T: If we are looking at feminism it is

essentially a struggle for equality, and so in that sense it is a fight for democracy in which women are engaged. We want to be able to develop our human potential as women, not playdolls.

I don't think it is male-bashing at all. Not at all. If anything, as the women's movement recognizes that women are socialized into accepting their inferior position, men are socialized into becoming macho and using violence. The use of violence and sexual assault is very damaging to their human potential. Very dehumanizing. No, it is the process of socialization we wish to change. We do not have an agenda against all males, that is such a simplistic analysis of a complex problem.

M: In the July 10/12 issue of the *Financial Post* John Geddes wrote an article entitled, "NAC's Leftist Brand of Feminism is Irrelevant." He goes on to state that women's plight isn't all that bad. NAC is definitely making a

"We want to be able to develop our human potential as women"

mountain out of a molehill. They sure are radical to ask for more than 69.6% of what a male earns for the same job, etc. He actually ends his article by stating that not only is NAC useless, but so are all other feminist organizations. How do you react to such sexist media coverage?

T: It is unfortunate that some media feels the need to attack NAC in this way. But, I think we also need to take pride that we are receiving so much media attention...It attests to how successful the organization has been. I think that is how you need to understand his attack on feminism.

M: It is a simple fact that women of low-income, immigrant, aboriginal, or disabled groups are faced with an even greater challenge than their white, upper-middle class counterparts. You, even in your renowned position as NAC president, experienced racism at a high federal level when Tory MP

John MacDougall incorrectly called you an "illegal immigrant." Do you have any words of encouragement to women in these minorities?

T: The women's movement is a place that has a real understanding of the added barriers that women of color face. I hope that my being from an Indian middle-class background is sending out the message that the women's movement is a real force for change. I want to express the level of commitment of the feminist movement to make anti-racism part of feminism...I see the women's movement as we go through this redefining process emerging even stronger.

M: OK, on a more controversial note, how do you feel about Kim Campbell's appointment as prime minister? We finally have a woman prime minister in office, but she doesn't support women's issues.

T: There were great hopes and great expectations...that in some way she would reflect the hopes and aspirations of so many women who have fought for so long and so hard to make it possible...Even under Brian Mulroney there were more women in the Cabinet and carrying senior portfolios. KC cut back on the number of women on her staff. She refuses to say where she stands on issues that have a huge impact on women's lives...Then, she plays the gender card, and says, "Vote for me I am a woman, I will do things differently."

I think it just shows a profound contempt for women, a profound contempt.

M: Well, the federal election is descending upon us. Do you have anything to say to Dalhousie students regarding it?

T: I think it is the responsibility of the women's movement to show we do not have a simplistic analysis, men against women. What we are talking about is relations of power. That is what we are talking about, and what we want addressed in this federal election is policies and where all politicians stand on them. Regardless of whether they are men or women.

It is a crucial election, especially for students...because you are really voting on what your future of the country is going to be...Students have an important role to play in defining that future. What is the future of this country going to look like? What is your future going to look like when you come out of university?

Hurtig pledges no fees

OTTAWA (CUP) — If you make him Prime Minister, Mel Hurtig says you'll never pay tuition again.

"We are adamant that there should be no tuition fees and the cost of a student's education would be paid back through the income tax system," the leader of the newly-formed National Party said in an interview with the *Charlatan* at Carleton University.

Hurtig, an Edmonton author and book publisher, was elected leader of the National Party when it was formed by 45 members last November. His bestseller *The Betrayal of Canada* contained a scathing critique of the Free Trade Agreement and of federal Tory policies.

"Education is absolutely a top priority," he said in a telephone interview

less than an hour after the election was called by Prime Minister Kim Campbell on Sept. 8.

Under his proposal, students "would pay nothing while in school." The cost of operating universities "could be easily made up through changes to the tax system," Hurtig said. He did not specify the changes.

"We think that's an infinitely fairer way," he said.

When reminded that education policy is a provincial responsibility, Hurtig said his party would use the federal government's influence to change policies.

"For one thing, we won't decrease transfer payments [to the provinces] the way the Conservatives have," he said. "We can influence post-second-

ary education and we will increase federal spending on post-secondary education."

Student representatives were pleasantly surprised by Hurtig's promise, which has not yet appeared in the National Party's policy statements.

"From our perspective it's a good thing," said Jocelyn Charron, communications director for the Canadian Federation of Students.

Charron noted that Hurtig's party has little chance of forming a government. "But just by saying this sort of thing, it puts the issue in the public domain and that's something we favor," he said.