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Dal photo: Maria Patriquin

Peace marchers do make a difference. Join them Saturday at noon, Grand Parade.

Work for peace

by Paul Webster

Five-hundred people congregated in the Grand Parade last Thursday morning to protest the outbreak of war in the Persian Gulf.

They were there, in the words of Bette Peterson from the Nova Scotia Voice of Women, "because the massacre we all feared has now begun".

The events of the last week have made it clear that a very large number of people living in Halifax oppose the war. Major protests took place on Thursday, a Vigil was held by hundreds of people Friday night and a second large

protest was held on Saturday. Another protest is planned as part of a nation-wide demonstration for 1:00 p.m. Saturday the 26th, beginning at the Grand Parade.

A wide range of arguments are being made by protestors and spokespeople representing organizations opposed to the war.

Paula Clarke, speaking for the Dalhousie Troops Out of the Gulf Coalition last Saturday, brought up what is undoubtedly the most pressing issue on people's minds when she asked the crowd, "Why are we not being given any information about the people being killed by our bombs? Bagdad is a

city of six million. There are 18 million Iraqis. They are being mercilessly bombed. How many civilians are being killed?"

Protestors have also begun to question the Canadian Government's refusal to adopt a neutral stance in the conflict, the implications of Mulroney's decision to send troops to the Gulf without prior Parliamentary approval, the decision not to allow a free vote in the House of Commons on our role in the Gulf, and the military's appropriation of very large sums of money needed for social programs. It is very clear that many people in Halifax are frightened and angered by the implications of Canada's role in the Gulf.

The Vigil last Friday evening reflected a quieter side of the protest. People sang peace songs and suggested logical alternatives to war, petroleum dependency, and the abuse of political power. Intelligent voices were raised discussing the links between warfare, social violence, political oppression, patriarchal oppression and environmental destruction.

Many of the hundreds of people present at the Vigil repeated that war in the Gulf was an avoidable human tragedy, and that grief is as appropriate a response to it as is a determination to change the political, social and economic traditions which have led us into war.

On Monday night the Dalhousie International Students Association organized a public forum in the McInnes Room at which political leaders articulated their positions on the war. The Liberal and Conservative parties did not send representatives.

Remarkings on the absence of the Liberals, and on the ambiguity of their position on the war, Nova Scotia NDP leader Alexa McDonough wondered aloud where Halifax Liberal MP Mary Clancy stands: "Does she support John Turner's pro-war stance, Jean Chretien's no-doubt uncomfortable position on the fence, or Lloyd Axworthy's decision to follow the NDP's lead in opposing the war?"

A working group has been organized at Dalhousie to develop a properly-researched assessment of the situation in the Gulf, the historical roots of the crisis, and its implications for human rights and for Canadian society. People interested in contributing to this project should contact the Dalhousie Public Interest Research Group at 494-6662. Written submissions can be left at the *Gazette*.

Student leaders ineffective

The DSU is the most important organization for students in the University community. As a democratically elected body it is responsible for serving the interests of all students.

However, unlike most democratic societies there are few checks and balances to ensure the DSU carries out its mandate.

The *Dalhousie Gazette* is one of the few bodies that attempts to ensure the DSU is accountable to students. As such we feel it is our responsibility to evaluate, from time to time, the performance of our student government.

This Report Card is an attempt to fairly assess the DSU's activities in the first academic term of 1990-91. In so doing we have solicited contributions from various interest groups and individuals involved in the university community and asked them to evaluate and grade this year's student government.

We have made no attempt to compare this year's council with those of previous years. We recognize that issues and individuals involved change annually and the task remains difficult for each succeeding group.

In this Report Card, particular emphasis has been placed upon Ralph Cochrane (President) and Patti Dow (Executive Vice President). As the most important campus-wide elected members of council they are the most visible and thus subject to the most criticism.

Yet, one must remember that the DSU is composed of representatives from many faculties, societies and interest groups. In addition, many responsibilities of council lie with appointed executive members and student representatives on the Dalhousie Board of Governors.

All students, as members of the Union, must take some responsibility for the action, or inaction, of their elected representatives.

This year's DSU has been successful in emphasizing and promoting mainstream social events. Clearly, the success of bringing 'top forty' bands to Dalhousie and the increased interest in sports have benefited many on campus.

However, organizing social activities is only one aspect of a student government's responsibilities.

The DSU is responsible for taking initiative and lobbying on students' behalf. Our student representatives should be addressing the concerns of all students. This includes taking action on issues ranging from student fees to course content.

Student politicians must recognize the political aspect in all activities. This ranges from social events to protest marches.

This is where the current DSU has failed most.

Although their efforts in the areas of entertainment and sport are commendable, they have failed to recognize that many students have different interests and goals.

The lack of non-alcoholic events and activities targeted for special interest groups reflects the DSU's insensitivity to the diversity of the university community.

In addition, many of the successes attributed to this year's council are due to the efforts of paid professional staff.

The complete lack of attention to the DSU's role as a student advocate has caused concern among many students.

During last spring's election campaign Dow told the *Gazette*, "...the only way you are going to get students' participation and student enthusiasm is by letting the students know what you are doing, and by letting them have respect for you as a society and as the student leaders."

The fact that the DSU has had so much difficulty this year in getting student participation in anything but social activities indicates this respect has not been earned.

There are ways to earn such respect, and perhaps by following a few suggestions this council can salvage its term in office.

Council must reach out to the student body. While advertising in the press and through posters is good, it is clearly not enough. The DSU needs to make personal contact with student groups and individuals.

Attending society meetings and events is a good start. Also having a table in the Student Union Building lobby and the Tupper Link where students can talk to councillors and express their concerns is important.

The President and Executive Vice President, who are given campus meal cards, and councillors could take their meals in all of the various cafeterias at Dalhousie. Thus making them accessible to students.

If you've read this far, you have already expressed interest in the function and nature of your student government. Student government works better when more people are involved. Do not limit your involvement to reading the *Gazette*.

The DSU Elections will take place February 11, 12, and 13. Get informed, get involved, and make sure you vote wisely.

Although the mean grade of this report card is a C-, we are unable to consider this council as average.

We do acknowledge that councillors have many responsibilities and time commitments. We further recognize that the high turn-over in student government makes the job a difficult one.

However, accepting that, we cannot over look the failure of this year's DSU to live up to its promises. In addition, student leaders when taking a position must recognize the responsibilities that come with it. We feel this year's council has not lived up to those responsibilities.

We have no choice but to fail them.