

Gazette Editor resigns

Student Government History #55

The early 1930's were one of the periods when student activists were greatly concerned about what they perceive to be student apathy. On November 2, 1932 the GAZETTE was bemoaning a 12 percent turnout in a Council by-election. Its solutions were more publicity of elections, and making them into a context of platforms rather than a popularity contest. Unfortunately the newspaper had itself given no publicity to the by-election, its attention being taken up by the attempt to turn back the Council's ban on off-campus dances. That attempt had gone to the extent of an editorial entitled "Council or Student Opinion?"

The annual alumni gathering was held in the new gymnasium, and those assembled pledged that alumni would pay the remaining debts on construction of the building. In the same week came the annual publication of the Council audit, and another by-product of a permanent Secretary-Treasurer was the unprecedented detail of the accounts. An opinion piece was carried, saying that as a result of the hotel dance question Council had lost the confidence of the students and should resign. The author suggested a new system of student government modelled upon the House of Commons. It appears that the first newspaper article on the dance ban came closest to the truth when it suggested that the item had been rushed through Council.

The author of the attack on Council hinted that Council mem-

bers were trying to silence the GAZETTE and accused the Committee of Nine of being lax in letting many fee increases go through unchallenged. If the newspaper's letters columns are an indication the student response was mainly about the kind of social life Dalhousie had and should have, not the kind of student government. For over a month the columns were more than half-filled with the debate on social life, questions such as the necessity and propriety of taking taxis from Shirreff Hall to the gymnasium.

The policy of the newspaper seems to have been an extreme and usually irrelevant conservatism, a longing for the good old days when people just lived the life of the mind, and became great. In early November the front page suggested that Dalhousie consider institution of the honour system, while an editorial suggested that the students had degenerated into an uninterested mob out for a good time. The editorial concluded with the thought that Council was unwilling to risk its popularity in an attempt to reverse the degeneration for the sake of Dalhousie.

The Council had ignored the newspaper and continued routine work, but on November 20 it voted to summon the Editor, Daniel Spry, to substantiate the charges in the GAZETTE. Even in taking this step only one member criticized the paper's attitude. A further indication of the Depression came when 15 students applied to be Glee and Dramatic property man whereas a few years earlier only one person was interested.

Scheduling was already a problem in the new gymnasium, with basketball appealing to Council for more practice time. The Council initiated consideration of demoting hockey from a major to a minor sport so that more money could go towards development of talent at the interfaculty level. For the first time Council gave financial support to the Maritimes Model League of Nations.

Athletics continued to dominate student activities, with the newspaper pushing for compulsory physical education, an aim for over 10 years. An editorial supported the demotion of hockey because it was felt that eventually this would lead to development of an undergraduate team able to compete at the intercollegiate level.

On December 1st, ten days after the Council summons, Managing Editor Edward Higgins announced that the GAZETTE Editor, Daniel Spry, had resigned to work in journalism and that an Associate Editor had left to work on dramatic criticism in Montreal. After Christmas Higgins himself was gone, and the News Editor, Harold Egan, had been appointed as Editor. There was no hint that the newspaper resignations had anything to do with Council's planned investigation of GAZETTE criticism of Council, but after the resignations the investigation was forgotten.

DAAC responded to the hockey suggestions by implementing for the first time a four-year rule, turning the team into an undergraduate one. The newspaper was incoherently delighted with this

opening up of opportunities for undergrads, and it suggested a four-year rule for all major sports. In a Christmas message Carleton Stanley expressed pleasure at the increased use of the library, cheerful attitude of students and formation of informal discussion groups. However, he also wrote, "Why any of you should wish 'compulsion' in the matter of taking exercise and enjoying your health, I cannot understand." He expressed a desire that students be "as free almost as the birds of the air".

Working through the Christmas exam period the Council approved cutting Pharos costs by use of cheaper paper and zinc cuts. After the newspaper resignations were accepted the appointment was made by a narrow margin, with former Editor Art Patillo gaining 4 of the 9 votes. The salary for permanent Secretary-Treasurer Murray Rankin was increased to \$550 on the strength of his first year and a half in the position.

The university began a series of lectures in January 1933, using leading academics from various Canadian universities. It was the first such effort to go into effect since the students ran series of "popular lectures" by academics in the 1870's. The newspaper's tone changed little under the new leadership, except for less criticism of Council. Editorials defended a mass resignation by the McGill Daily staff in the face of Council interference and (for the first time) attacked the lecture system of teaching as poor when compared to discussion groups.

DAGS submits beefs

A reassessment of the relationship between the Dalhousie Student Union and the major university societies is overdue. The present relationship does not accommodate the level of activity achieved by some societies, nor is it conducive to their further development.

The basis of the existing arrangement seems to be the belief that the societies exist solely to

serve the social needs of their members. Serving the broader interests of students is assumed to be the prerogative of the Student Union. While not wishing to deny the Union a role in serving the academic, cultural, and material interests of students, we believe that societies can play an active, and, in some cases, a primary role in these areas.

A central issue in the reassessment of the relationship between the Union and the societies is the allocation of Union funds. Those societies that have chosen to, and proven themselves capable of, addressing a wide range of issues facing their memberships ought to receive a permanent annual per capita allocation corresponding to the cost of those services that can be provided more adequately by the individual societies than by the Student Union. This is clearly so in the case of those societies that have shown themselves able to provide the necessary time, expertise, and understanding for the effective administration of their constituents' interests.

The justification for the Dalhousie Association of Graduate Students' initiative on this question is our belief that the societies are often in a position to be more responsive to the needs of their respective memberships than is the Student Union. Furthermore, the societies alone are capable of serving the particular interests of their members. Over the past three years, DAGS has clearly demonstrated, both to its members and to the student body at large, its ability to articulate the interests of its members. DAGS' efforts have recently secured a basic requirement of a social facility. Further, it has shown itself capable of

representing the academic interests of its members. Over this same period, DAGS' ability to provide these services has steadily developed. Inevitably, this development has incurred a high level of financial cost. With respect to this cost, it is urged that the Student Union consider the following important point: DAGS, in order for this present healthy development to continue and in order for it to attain the necessary level of maturity required for its permanence, has to seek a marked improvement in its financial position.

Far from diminishing the importance of the Union, this proposal for decentralization will lead to a more effective distribution of goods and services to the members of its constituent bodies, and therefore will have only positive implications for the Union. It is, after all, an explicit policy of the Union to encourage the growth of societies' activities generally.

The great advantage of putting Union funds into the hands of active and responsible societies is that virtually all of these funds will be spent directly in the interests of students. DAGS has a very low administrative overhead: only about ten per cent of this year's budget is taken up by administrative costs and salaries. There is no reason to believe that this percentage will eventually rise. In fact, it will probably fall when DAGS receives a substantial per capita annual

allocation.

From a practical viewpoint, we would suggest that a constitutional amendment is required to accommodate DAGS' aspirations. We are insisting upon a permanent change whereby DAGS would automatically receive an annual allocation from the Student Union fee paid by its members. Such a change can be facilitated by a fairly simple re-writing of that section of the Union constitution that describes the relationship between the Union and the societies.

The Student Union should recognize that DAGS is the largest and the most active of the societies on campus. Although this brief has been written with a focus on the societies in general, we insist that our case be considered on its individual merits. If DAGS alone among the societies is in a position to deliver a wide range of services in academic, cultural, and material areas, DAGS alone should be accorded a special status. It will be counter-productive to the interests of students, and ultimately to the interests of the Union, if your committee takes the position that all societies must be on the same terms with the Union. We could only treat such an approach as a deliberate sidestepping of the issue, the issue being that DAGS has developed to the point where its present relationship with the Union is intolerable. It is imperative that this relationship be revised.

Open letters next week

John Cheyne of the Dalhousie Association of Graduate Students submitted an open letter to Bruce Russell, the Student Union President, for publication in this week's Gazette. The letter is not included in this issue though the Graduate students' brief to the Council is. The reason for this is simple and straight-forward. The Gazette editor was under the impression that Mr. Russell received his copy of the letter at the same time as the Gazette and if he wished to reply would do so in time to meet the Gazette deadline. In actual fact Mr. Russell received his letter late Wednesday afternoon - long past the deadline - while the Gazette received its copy on Monday - in plenty of time to be typeset for this issue. In all fairness to Mr. Russell we felt that we should not print a copy of the DAGS letter until Mr. Russell could compose an open response letter to run with it. It is common courtesy to deliver a letter to the person for whom it is intended before one delivers a copy of that letter to the press. In this case that was not done so the Gazette will wait until next week to publish either letter.

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