

# WHY WE NEED UNIVERSITIES

No easy answers

There are no easy answers to the question of tuition and privatization. The argument brings together two clearly warring factions — on the one side the Canadian Federation of Students, who have stated that they are against any form of tuition fees whatsoever, and on the other, those members of government who feel that university education should be paid for by those who benefit from it.

Find a cure, don't treat the symptoms

The real dilemma is what the benefits of university are. Besides the obvious ones — extra time to indulge our cerebral pursuits before we hit the workplace, a chance to build lifelong friendships, the opportunity to enrich our minds — there are those we seldom consider.

The benefits of higher education are far-reaching. From before the days when ancient Greeks got together to chat about society and utopia, humanity has been progressing largely through the work of thoughtful dissenters. The annals of human history are filled with stories of people who dared to think for themselves, and it is because of them that we have the health, technology, and civilization we enjoy today.

The university has a pretty good track record. Many of the discoveries we take for granted nowadays came about through the purely theoretical thinking of people who, at the time, couldn't possibly prove their beliefs. With a history like this, do we need to justify the importance of university?

There are many demands on the government dollars; welfare, shelter for the homeless, public security, and environmental problems are all costly concerns of our civilization. Shouldn't the government concentrate on funding universities' graduates — who might find a cure for society's ills — rather than simply treating the symptoms?

Alistair Croll

## l e t t e r s *continued*

### What's a PIRG?

To the Editor:

We are writing to introduce the Dalhousie Community to the Dalhousie Public Interest Research Group (Dal-PIRG) Organizing Club. We are a registered B society and are continuing our campaign to establish a PIRG on the Dalhousie campus. PIRGs are student funded, student directed research, education and action organizations that have been established at eleven Canadian universities and on 130 campuses in 25 states in the United States. PIRGs offer students an opportunity to test the knowledge and ideas learned in the classrooms in real-life situations. Dal-PIRG will provide a practical focus for student perspectives, a means of translating apathy and dissatisfaction into positive action for social change.

PIRGs are student supported through a refundable per student fee that is usually put in place through a student initiated referendum. The funding is used to set up a full-time office, hire professional staff, conduct research and publish reports. The results of this research form the basis for action by students via the media, community organizing, public forums and educational campaigns.

PIRGs elsewhere in Canada and the U.S. have worked effectively on a variety of issues, including environmental, consumer, housing, health care, women's issues, and government accountability.

At Dalhousie, the Dal-PIRG Organizing Club is currently conducting an educational campaign, including film showings, information tables and class talks throughout campus. In October of last year, we took an informal poll showing that 90 per cent of those polled were in favour of the idea of a PIRG at Dalhousie. In a few weeks we will begin a petition drive to establish support for the formation of Dal-PIRG and for holding a referendum to establish a refundable \$2 per student, per semester fee to fund Dal-PIRG. If you are interested in helping out, we have weekly meetings Tuesdays at 7 pm in Rm. 304 of the SUB, or call 429-4330 for more information. The Dal-PIRG Organizing Club

### Leiter subject

Dear Editor:

It is amazing that anyone can look at the pictures of innocent children who have been brutally injured at the hands of a powerful army and cry imbalance (Barbara Leiterman, Gazette, Jan. 11).

Clearly it is the children of the Intifadah who have suffered the injustice of imbalance. The youth of the West Bank and Gaza Strip have been born into a world of occupation where they daily have been forced to endure all the indignities this encompasses. They have suffered continual human rights violations and in the face of a world showing little concern, they erupted in frustration to fight for what all people deserve: the right to control their own lives, in their own country.

Armed with stones they have bravely withstood the power and brutality of the Israeli army.

In addition, Ms. Leiterman criticizes the Intifadah as "a protest that has needlessly chosen violent rather than non-violent civil disobedience". I would hardly characterize the throwing of stones as violent, especially in comparison to the Israeli response to the Intifadah. This has constituted indiscriminate use of live ammunition and government policy of beating with the object of breaking limbs, not to mention the use of collective punishments like demolition of homes, lengthy curfews, and the closure of all universities and schools, depriving students of the education that all of us as students can see as important. All of these actions have been condemned by Amnesty International and other human rights organizations.

It is unfortunate that whenever the irrefutable facts about the plight of the Palestinians are expressed, they are continually dismissed by some as unfair and unbalanced, rather than viewed with the compassion they deserve.

Samira Zayid

### Thank you

Dear Editor,

We write in response to a letter captioned 'legitimacy' in the November 30, 1989 issue of the gazette (volume 122, number 12.9).

Apart from the gross impoliteness in the letter, which is worrisome, the writer portrays some factual inaccuracies which need correction.

It should not be difficult to say that the Government of Ghana is one recognized by Canada, and on that basis its High Commissioner accepted as duly accredited. His Excellency G.O. Agyekum, therefore, participated in the Africa Night celebrations as the factual and legally recognized High Commissioner of Ghana. To say that the people of Ghana have not approved of his status as such High Commissioner is to suggest that the Ghanaian populace participates in the selection and accreditation of its ambassadors — which is false.

Also, whilst human rights violations in Ghana cannot be denied, we deem it a gross exaggeration and a total inconsistency, for any comparison to be made between Ghana's record and that of Hitler's Nazi Germany.

We wish to thank the writer for the interest that he has shown in our country.

Yours faithfully,  
John K. Akpalu

### Them's the...

Dear Gazette:

Re: Padraic Brake's article on the "Homosexuality and the Church Conference"

This particular article presents not only an example of slanderous misrepresentation but also an example of poor journalism. The author blatantly implied, by way of a second-hand quote, that the opinion of Dr. Schlech was that AIDS was the wrath of God upon homosexuals. All it took us was one simple phone call to the Doctor to confirm that this was not, of course, true. Just a quick ques-

tion ... why didn't you call? Thorough journalism would have included a verification of a source.

Sincerely,  
Karen Durling  
Brent Stiller

### ...Brakes

Dear Editor:

I was embarrassed by your "gay-bashing" article in the latest edition. Your misrepresentation of the local Christian community exceeded even prior exaggerations, stereotypes and slander. You made reference to Dr. Schlech and his planned information session on homosexuality at a local seminar. You quoted someone saying that he would propagate the view that AIDS was the wrath of God upon homosexuals. You were truly misinformed. It probably would have been a bit too conservative for such a radical paper to check with the Doctor himself on what his opinion on that subject was. A paper which defends the rights of homosexuals should spend a little less time slandering a doctor who provides medical care for AIDS patients when many others choose not to do so. Your article misrepresents the opinion of Dr. Schlech. It is of my opinion that you owe the Doctor an apology. I hope that you will find the maturity to offer it.

Birr Streakes

*Editor's note: Repeated phone calls to Dr. Schlech prior to last issue's deadline were never returned. When we finally contacted him this week, he declined to be interviewed.*