

## editorial

## letters

# Blah blah blah

As your new Gazette posterboys, we thought it fitting to include our vitals, if you catch our drift...

**Hair:** Kind of like, y'know, like blond.

**Eyes:** sky blue.

**Height:** 6'2.

**Weight:** 155 lbs.

**Shoe size:** 10.

**Turn-ons:** Watching people brush their teeth.

**Turn-offs:** Negative people.

**Favourite food:** My mom's.

**Ambition:** To start a health spa in the rocky mountains of Manitoba.

## John

**Hair:** None.

**Eyes:** Hazel.

**Height:** 6'0.

**Weight:** 200 lbs.

**Shoe size:** 9.5.

**Turn-ons:** Walking my dog and fishing.

**Turn-offs:** Ugly people.

**Favourite food:** Rice cakes.

**Ambition:** I'd like to marry rich and join a health spa.

## Andrew

all over the DSU executive like two fat kids on a Smartie. If they mess

up, we'll find

it on the cover.

But otherwise,

we want to

keep you in-

formed about

what's happen-

ing on the local,

provincial and

national levels.

After all, life

shouldn't just

revolve around

your classes.

Further-

more, there are

a few things

that really bug

us that we

think you

should know

about.

1) People

who whine

about their

workload. Everyone's

got a tough work-

load, but not

everyone

whines about

it. What makes you

think we care?

2) Pretentious

people. Now we

know you won't

admit it, but we

know who you

are. When you

think you've

made some

startling

philosophical

revelation, just

remember, some-

one else probably

thought of it first.

3) The current

trend towards

embracing

martini/lounge

culture. If it was

really that "cool",

why did it die

out fifty years

ago?

4) Cigars. Now

that all the

movie stars

are smoking

them, you

know it's no

longer hip.

Not a great

list, but at least

you know a

bit.

Come out and

join the Gazette

staff next year,

because as you

**We are John Cullen and Andrew Simpson, the Gazette's new Editor-in-Chief and Copy Editor for the 1997/98 publication year.**

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Not a great list, but at least

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Come out and join the

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because as you can

see by this shoddy

editorial, we're a

little tapped for

ideas.

**JOHN CULLEN AND ANDREW SIMPSON**

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## Sad, but true

Rather than continue to be frustrated, I must respond with support for Jason Morrison's "plight" to address the problem of science education at Dalhousie. What I understand from his articles in past Gazettes is that he does feel that a BSc is a worthwhile form of education. His concerns regard the way many undergrad science courses are currently taught, and even more so how they are evaluated (primarily using multiple choice exams) in that they do not provide students with a means to develop skills that are relevant to what they are learning.

While I think that it is impossible to test this theory until a few years post-graduation, he is right on the money — for far more than the two reasons I will elaborate on.

First, I think that the Socratic method, combined with a few good resource texts is the only way to learn. I took one course at Dal in this way and there is no comparison to the amount of information that I have retained. It is only logical that reading a text (the one required by the prof, of course, because that's the one that will be used to make up the questions for the multiple choice exam) and committing facts to short term memory to regurgitate on an exam cannot provided anyone with useful skills to apply to a future career. Most of my bio and psych courses (unfortunately, these are two subjects that are taught using a lot of multiple choice evaluation and unidirectional lectures) were designed in this way. I'm sure the profs think that way of teaching is crap, as well.

Unfortunately, undergrads are so caught up in getting decent marks in these courses — so that they can apply to professional or graduate programs — that they don't even realize what a silly and futile system it is. Until they get to my vantage point and feel, quite literally, sad — sad that those years seem like a blur. I truly wonder what I learned. Although I did learn things, I know that the way I learned them could have been much more conducive to sanity and intellectual development.

Second, Jason's suggestion of having student markers to evaluate papers is brilliant. What a fantastic learning/work experience for upperclassmen and women. This would be an opportunity for students to develop a better understanding about what they were really supposed to learn in Psych 1000 or Chem 1010; it's the basics that we really need to know anyways. Further, student markers could be employed to "walk through" the exam with students taking the course once the exam is handed back.

If we really wanted to provide the best undergrad education experience possible for everyone, students who have previously taken courses could be employed as "resource" or counselling people to inform undergrads about what combination of courses in particular faculties are the best, based on what one wants to "get" out of 4 years.

I understand that people could misconstrue Jason's comments as coming from someone who does poorly on multiple choice exams. I hardly think that this is the case. Of course, if the system appears to do well for you, then you are less likely to raise concerns about it. Furthermore, it should be obvious to any student that while a few multiple choice exams may test knowledge acquisition, they sure as heck do not test how well that knowledge can be put into practice.

Unfortunately, Dal science's multiple-choice and 300 students-per-class system only works for those who are self-taught, which excludes about 80 per cent of us. And

it creates the "paranoid" undergrad mentality where everyone huddles around after an exam and compares who picked A or D, as if it really mattered. It also creates the "I needed one more point to get the A-" attitude.

I'm getting another ulcer crisis. If this is what we want out of a six thousand dollar university education, then we should take a hard look at why we are here. This is a topic for another day. If nothing comes out of Jason's excellent suggestions, at least he has started the new generation of profs to start thinking. We have got to break the cycle of poor teaching methods and evaluations so that our universities stop becoming sausage factories.

**Khrista Boylan**

## Defending the rest of the world

Never in my life have I read such an ignorant and homophobic article as that which was entitled "Defending the Canadian Red Cross", published in last week's Gazette. The author clearly chose to ignore the blatantly homophobic portion of the Red Cross Blood Donor questionnaire. He attempted to somehow defend the Red Cross for their discrimination because, as he put it, "Let's face it, saving lives and easing pain is more important than avoiding the disfavour of a group of people."

I guess this author would support the old saying: the end justifies the means. Hey, if we can save some people's lives, who cares about those queers and their dirty blood. Let's just ship them all off to an island where they belong. Well, I'm sorry Mr. Benjamin, it's just not going to work that way.

Everyday more and more people are declaring their homosexuality and joining in the fight for their acceptance. They're not going to be kept quiet. It's people like you who ignore their voices that are the problem. I ask you: did you even read the question on the donor form that asks whether the donor, specifically a male, has ever had sex with another male? Don't you see the wrong in that? Any male that answers yes is deemed a homosexual and, in their eyes, HIV-positive. Their blood is merely not used.

You say that the ultimate goal of the blood drive is to save lives and ease pain but what about all the blood donated from homosexuals that is not used. Couldn't lives be saved with that? It is, in no way, all HIV-positive. Yet, each day gallons of blood goes unused.

Furthermore, nowadays the number of homosexuals contracting HIV is declining. Education on safe sex techniques is widespread and reaching the gay community. The Red Cross, or whoever is in charge of the donor form, is ignoring this.

They maintain, as you do, that identifying homosexuals is a step in ensuring that no HIV-positive blood be used in transfusions. Well, isn't that what the whole screening process is about? It seems to me that they're categorizing gays to make their work easier. They are obviously asking the wrong questions if they want to ensure our safety.

As long as that question remains on the donor form, the Red Cross will be deemed homophobic by many, not just "a group of people." And as long as there are people like you who ignore the rights of the homosexual community, there will be homophobia.

**Kathy Jollimore**

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## Vol. 129 / No. 24

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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.

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