

Don't believe all you read

It is staggering to realize the extent to which the press picks and chooses from vast amounts of information to portray an issue, thus often giving it a distorted view.

This revelation is not new, but the extent of it was brought home during the Cuba conference at the beginning of the month. The conference hosted a plenary on the international media presentation of Cuba.

Here, panelists discussed the American government's use of the media as a weapon against the Cubans. The panel's chair, Robert Hoogendoorn of Laurentian University, was particularly critical of the press' almost exclusive depiction of Cuba as a militant nation. While it is true that Cuba is militant (the greatest threat to Cuba lies only 90 miles away), it is still a developing nation that has other things to do besides prepare for war.

Another speaker, Anthony Platt, said "most papers are not willing to publish anything neutral, let alone positive, about

Cuba." Platt said this is the position of Newsweek Magazine.

It is distressing to understand the extent of this bias in the Canadian press. The Halifax Herald's coverage of the conference focussed on the alleged defection of one Cuban and the expulsion of an exile distributing unauthorized pamphlets. One Halifax man said he heard of the conference only on Cuban short-wave radio and through the Gazette!

This leads to the real dilemma: can balanced information about Cuba be consistently found in the press? Are we getting the true picture about all issues and nations, and how much of the bias is to be blamed on American government policy?

There is American legislation prohibiting dealings with Cubans. The effects of American policies can be seen in the allegations that Sheraton headquarters in Boston is displeased with its Halifax branch for holding the conference. Is this the effect that American government is looking for? It is definitely aided by the press in creating a damaging pic-

ture of Cuba. How many other nations are drawn in a similar light? One example is Grenada. After the invasion in Autumn 1983, the American press coverage increased, changing from a predominantly negative image to a positive one, encouraged by an American government eager to justify its intervention after the fact.

There has been criticism of the conference on the grounds that it did not present a balanced view or touch on all aspects of Cuba, but that is to be expected, considering the volume of information on Cuba since the revolution of 1959. It was a success because it has opened people's eyes to much of Cuban life that has been distorted due to the picture the press has created. One was able to walk out of the brief conference with a real desire to find answers to questions brought up by panelists in their fifteen-minute talks.

Don't believe everything you read in the newspapers, but, at the same time, don't ignore the issues.

Paul Beasy



The freedom of the press belongs to those who control the press.

o p i n i o n

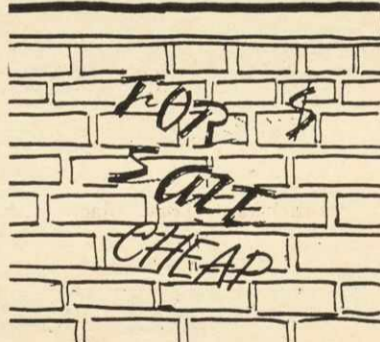
Wall fall down, go boom

The recent liberation of East Germany, through the destruction of the Berlin Wall, is a happy and important moment in world history. It is important, however, that we remember just how important it is to act rationally at times such as these.

The wall is a huge concrete behemoth spanning miles of Berlin. Day by day, it is being chipped away by citizens and tourists. We are told the price of the concrete chips range from \$5 to as much as \$100.

Surely a government can see the potential good in the destruction and sale of the wall?

There are many alternatives open to the governments of Ger-



many, both East and West. Why not send a piece of the wall to all those people whose families were separated, or better yet, to the governments of all the nations, so that they might erect memorials to the destruction of the Iron Curtain.

Surely, however, the government has enough common sense to see that it is sitting on a financial goldmine. Why not privatize the sale of chips of the wall and donate the money generated to furthering the causes of human freedom?

One does not have to look far to find uses for the funds raised. Amnesty International, the United Nations, or even Oxfam could profit from the sale of the wall, and people would be able to own lasting mementoes of the wall to remember that for which it stood — and fell.

Alistair Croll

l e t t e r s

Guidance?

To Mr. Andrew Craft
Editor
Dalhousie Student Union Daily Planner
(cc *The Gazette*)

Dear Mr. Craft:
As Chaplains on campus we write to express our disappointment with the pregnancy counselling offered in the Dalhousie Student Union Daily Planner.

Specifically, we are deeply concerned that the guidance is heavily biased in favour of abortion counselling. We feel very strongly that the handbook should also include referral numbers of agencies specifically concerned with assisting a woman who wishes to give birth to her child. Such agencies would be Birthright and Home of the Guardian Angel. It may be obvious that we cannot be included in the group of counselling agencies that give unbiased

advice; however, we believe we should be included as a group that can give support to those who wish to carry their baby to term.

We want to be clear that our personal and religious convictions are not the sole motivation for this letter. We are also concerned that the guidance offered does not address the needs of all students, and is therefore inconsistent with the stated mandate of

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FIRST AID COURSES OFFERED

St. John Ambulance Emergency First Aid Courses will be held at Dalhousie over the next few months. There is a \$25.00 charge which covers the cost of workbooks and pamphlets. The one-day sessions are scheduled for:

November 17
December 15
January 12
January 26

February 21
February 23
March 9
March 23

from 8:30 am. to 4:30 pm. Registration and payment must be made prior to the day of the course and a confirmation will follow.

For more information, or to register, contact the Safety Office at 424-2495.

The following committees have vacant student representation and need to be filled ASAP:

- Senate Committee on Academic Administration (2 pos.)
 - Senate Physical Planning Committee (1 pos.)
 - Senate Library Committee (1 pos.)
 - Senate Advisory Committee on International Development (2 pos.)
 - Senate Computing & Information Technology Planning Committee (1 pos.)
 - Alumni Award for Teaching Excellence (2 pos.)
- Please contact the Student Union Office, Rm. 222 on the 2nd floor of SUB for more information.