

The Letters/Opinions section of the Gazette is meant as a campus forum for all Dalhousie students. The opinions expressed within may not necessarily be those of the Gazette staff or editorial board. We welcome all submissions, but reserve the right to edit for style and content. It is the Gazette's mandate not to print racist, sexist or homophobic material.

Student apathy at the root of DSU actions

Now that the strike is over students have the opportunity to reflect on what was done during the strike and by whom. Since we became the "victims", at least in the eyes of most, by default our official representative, the DSU, was given centre stage. They were heralded as the vehicle through which students should be served. Too bad they failed.

This is not necessarily to say that the DSU should have sided with the DFA or the administration. However, the continued claims of the DSU to be taking the "student stance" seemed nothing more than hollow rhetoric. A retrospective look speaks for itself. What did the DSU do?

Before the strike they spent \$2000 on an interesting provincial election ad campaign that came too late and lacked the substance needed to influence campaign platforms. Plus hundreds of dollars were spent chauffeuring students in minivans to polls on election day at the expense of the DSU (meaning money out of our pockets). How many students took advantage of this service? Less than 10% of students used the free ride, although certain people took advantage of it for their own personal use. This was just the

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their tentative agreement. I cannot see how anything at Dalhousie will change in favour of the students given the present outcome of the strike.

As students stress themselves trying to live up to their academic expectations in the aftermath of the strike, professors are compensated 3.5 days missed as long as they make themselves available to the students April 4-5. This means absolutely nothing to any student who works weekends. Where is the compensation for students?

I have decided to leave Dalhousie and will complete my undergraduate degree elsewhere. Some members of the DFA upon hearing my decision felt that the same problems would plague any other university I may choose. My response: the DFA obviously thinks it is better elsewhere as they have explicitly stated on the news and on campus billboards. Students have heard many times that Dalhousie professors are among the lowest paid in Canada. From a student's point of view Dalhousie tuition is one of the highest in Canada. Now in the aftermath of the strike students are perhaps facing yet another tuition hike to pay for the professors increased salary.

Perhaps I would not be so bitter about paying a few hundred dollars more if I was ensuring myself a quality education. However, I work hard throughout the summer months to pay for an education I am not receiving. I am saddened by the lack of passion so many of my professors have expressed for their job. To those who believe (naively) that Dalhousie has achieved educational ideals, please listen more carefully. Believing is not enough.

CHRIS MCCROSSIN
BSc. in frustration

beginning.

During the strike things only got worse. It seemed that the biggest priority of the DSU executive (new and old) was how many times they could get into the media. Using the media as a tool to promote the interest of the students can be very effective but not when the cause is forgotten, as seems to have been the case. There were many initiatives launched through the DSU, such as the rally, which comes to mind as a success due to the student participation. However, how many people there really knew the issues on the table and communicated to the DSU what the students wanted the DSU to do about the situation?

Our choice was voices...what happened?

Call it the politics of organized passivity. This year's DSU was dismayingly short-sighted in their responses to the DFA strike and student demands for an active role in the forcing of a settlement.

But lets back up for a second. Earlier this year president Chris Adams and the rest of the DSU rode out one dispute between Dalhousie's administration and educators employed at the university. Throughout the negotiations and strike preparations among Dal's TAs and part-time instructors the DSU quietly "gathered information" and refused to take a stand. Never mind that virtually every student at Dal is affected by the way TAs and part-timers are treated and payed. Never mind that by far the majority of TAs and part-timers are actually grad students at Dal, and therefore members of the Dalhousie Student Union. Adams and co. dismissed the concerns of TAs, part-timers and their students by pointing to the university's accounting ledgers and crying poorhouse on behalf of Tom Traves.

Clearly they thought that they could do the same thing with the faculty strike. As everyone who was at the DSU's "information meeting" before the strike last month knows, Dal's students were not willing to let them off so easy.

So they organized a rally. But what a rally! Oy vey!

Games! Hot Dogs! Want to wave a sign? Here they are, already printed up for you! "We pay we say"; "no strike no hike"; "don't exclude us include us"; "if there is no us there is no U"; and my personal favourite, "our choice is voice". What choice? Whose voice?

My partner teaches five year old children in the Halifax school system. She considers it an insult to their intelligence and individuality to give them pre-printed drawings to colour, or to force them to express themselves through other people's cutesy words and phrases. But according to the DSU this is good enough for the students at Dalhousie University.

Following the rally, the DSU stance on the strike shifted. No longer were they simply against a strike, but they also demanded that Dalhousie maintain its quality of

education. Nonetheless, they were unwilling to do something to force the administration to address the quality of education issues raised by the Dalhousie Faculty Association. Once again, the best that the DSU could do was point to the university's accounting ledgers and cry poorhouse on behalf of Tom Traves.

Meanwhile, a group of Dal students, frustrated by DSU inaction, decided to act on their own. Students in Solidarity for a Quality Education began to organize student protests by joining their professors on the picket lines,

organizing teach-ins and planning for rallies in the event of an extended strike. Signs were designed by individuals, decisions made by consensus. Minority opinions in the group were respected as it developed and refined its message and position.

What support did the Students in Solidarity get from the DSU? None. Despite repeated requests, the DSU refused to do so little as to announce the existence of the group on its "information network". The party apparatus would not tolerate dissention. Instead, the DSU conducted its

lawsuits? The DSU (therefore the students). Who really filed these lawsuits? The 'average' student? No. One look at the news that night would show that several members of next year's executive, along with other prominent 'SUB rats', were yet again being interviewed as they attempted to track down the two defendants of the lawsuits.

Is this taking the "student stance", or is this the DSU (including next year's executive) trying to glorify itself? But how is the DSU supposed to know what the "student stance" really is when under 20% of students bother to vote? The sparks of real student enthusiasm that were demonstrated in the strike through independent rallies and debate hopefully will not be lost on the Dalhousie student body in the future. The apathy of students is really to blame for the inability of the DSU to present our interests in a productive manner. With tuition hikes and budget cuts an inevitable part of the future for university students, more students need to be aware of the issues and be concerned with putting students in the positions of representation that will best serve those interests. The biggest loss of the recent strike will be if students do not learn that lesson. After four years at Dal, I am only just realizing this now.

MOLLIE ROYDS

own protests, which did not require student input or participation. First, our student union kicked the DFA strike information help-desk out of the SUB. Then it designed the student "graveyard" in front of the SUB, once again stifling the diversity of student voices with their own trite catch-phrases and slogans. Then the DSU decided that suing the DFA and the administration was a great publicity stunt.

Never mind that bringing a suit of "services not rendered" buys into the consumerist model of

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