

## Letting off a little steam

So much to write about and so little space. Quebec elections, native self-government, a brutal beating on campus and the door to Dal Photo being locked.

Actually, the door to Dal Photo isn't locked as I write this. One of our staff photographers is developing film right now. However if you or I wanted to use the dark room today, we wouldn't be allowed. Maybe next week or next month, but not today.

I'm probably being petty. There are so many more important things to bitch about.

Last week I watched one of those phone-in shows on TV and the 30 minute topic was native self-government. Being from Labrador I watched with interest as a native leader visiting Davis Inlet was interviewed. One minute I was convinced that self-government was the only right thing to do, and the next I was sure it was completely impractical.

I've recently realized that the mine my father works at and the Trans Labrador Highway which my friends and family travel, are in violation of native land claims. I think the Newfoundland and Federal government have proven that our justice system isn't doing a whole lot of good in communities like Davis Inlet. Why not let the community give it a shot and let them at least try to sort out the 'impossibilities' critics are so sure will arise?

Let's not forget about the Quebec elections. Not really much to rant about there. The separatists are in power but polls show only 40% of Quebec's population are in favour of sovereignty. It'll be a few months before the rest of Canada will have to worry about getting a passport to buy a two-four of Laurentide.

For some reason, I find Newfoundlanders in particular are quick to offer help to Quebec in packing its bags. It has something to do with Quebec having a distinct society, but now Newfoundland. Granted, Newfinese is not considered an official language of Canada, but who couldn't agree that Newfoundland has a distinct society with entertainers like Buddy Waisname and the Other Fellas?

All the same, I was never one to pout when it was rumoured Quebec wanted to leave. I'd beg until I turned blue in face if it meant that Quebec would remain a part of Canada. Fermont, Quebec is one my hometown's closest neighbours and I'd hate to see either community feel alienated when the next city is an eight hour drive away.

I really don't want to say much about Darren Watts who was beaten last Saturday night. I only hope that he recovers and the people who are responsible are found.

So I suppose the fact that only two Gazette photographers can gain access to Dal Photo is a small problem. So is not being able to train new volunteers until a new director is elected. So is having to explain to students interested in photography that the Gazette has no control as to whether the darkroom is open or if a yearbook is going to be published. So is having to apologize to a staff member who was told by Dalhousie Student Union executive she had a job this year and telling her she has to reapply because certain people feel changes have to be made to Dal Photo.

Yes, I'm being vague, but I figure if people want to find out why a DSU service was shut down, they can harass the student union themselves.

And if I'm being petty, well a little pettiness never hurt anyone.

Judy Reid



## Lost in an unknown territory

*Soundari Gurusamy is an international student at Dalhousie. Through research and personal interviews she talks about some of the difficulties international students face on university campuses.*

When a student comes from a country with different cultural and traditional perspectives, experiencing a new culture and a educational system is like 'feeling lost in an unknown territory'. Most university campuses' social programmes are not designed to accommodate different cultures and hence they are not 'internalized' for international students. Orientation only in September before classes start is not enough.

Canadian students are afraid to reveal how ignorant they are about an international student's country of origin and their culture. The result is that 'they keep a distance' which leads to international students being 'left alone'.

When a foreign student is timid and shy, it is very difficult for her or him to make friends or get help academically or fit in socially. Based on information gathered through personal interviews, more discrimination existed at the laboratory instructor/tutorial assistants level than at the faculty level. In the classroom setting, if the international student does not have a companion from his/her own region, then the classroom is less friendly for that person. Sometimes the difficulties and cultural variations faced by the international students are more challenging than the challenges in the educational system.

In most cases, international students are isolated from families and friends and are not able to make many friends in their new social setting. They face several factors like cultural differences, personal attitudes, personal obligations to the family, strong motivation to be the best student, lack of time, over-

whelming study load, future job prospects, and above all very limited financial resources. Under these pressures, they live and study and return to their home countries with some negative views. If they are to be productive citizens of their country, their study and stay abroad should give them positive attitudes, excellence and expertise so that both host and home countries benefit. To achieve this end as suggested in the ISA Bulletin in 1989, it is important for the host educational institutions to implement special programmes oriented towards alleviating social stress

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created for these unique students.

The majority of foreign students experience 'culture shock' due to cultural differences between the home and the host country. They also have additional problems of adjusting to new 'classroom behaviour', interrelationships with faculties and communities, and living with racism. In extreme conditions, the stress of culture shock could become so serious that it could affect the students psychologically and even physically which could also interrupt their academic excellence.

Most international students spend almost all of their time studying,

trying to get good grades for the amount of money their parents or their government agencies invested in them. Their personal responsibility makes them almost like slaves to their rooms, classes and libraries. Their social activities are minimal although there are cultural festivals and ethnic functions celebrated during the year. Some of the international women students that I spoke to hardly visited any other places in Nova Scotia outside the metro area. Intense study programs, coupled with unknown places and people, a strong motivation to get good grades, the expense of travel, and cultural differences make their stay frustrating and often depressing.

There are hardly any women counsellors or mentors who are familiar with different cultures available on campus to help orient international women students. Counsellors should become aware of the perceptions of people from different parts of the world. Another important reason why international women need special attention is that women foreign students differ in their social perspectives than men foreign students from the same country.

For the future, the challenge still remains to ensure equal access to education and training. To make the lives of foreign students in Canada positive, educational institutions have the obligation to recognize the negative symptoms and take measures to alleviate them. It also should address the needs of all of its students living and learning in a cross-cultural settings. University professors and administrative bureaucrats should recognize that their system is very much of Eurocentric-oriented and should be willing to incorporate non-European, non-Western viewpoints and perceptions in their practices and policy making.

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