

Letters

Botha has no clothes

To the editor:

The letter by Messrs. Murphy and Conrad published recently in the *Gazette* was truly laughable. After declaring themselves the moral barometer of Dalhousie, they went on to urge all 'right-thinking' students to refuse to pay their student loans on the grounds that the funds might be used to support Apartheid in South Africa. Hilarious! They should be congratulated for creating a truly novel excuse for welching on a loan.

Their attitude, however, is one that has seized this university in a growing tide of hypocrisy. Suddenly Dalhousie has put itself at the forefront of a conflict that many students, in their sage wisdom, have determined it is up to them to rectify. What would the students who signed the petition to divest say if they knew that virtually every aspect of their lives was in some way tied to a repressive regime somewhere or another. Will Dalhousie divest from companies that are involved in with the Soviet Union? How many of the students drink Coke or Pepsi? Are they aware, I wonder, that these companies invest millions of dollars in East Bloc economies? Will Dalhousie divest from companies that have ties with repressive South American regimes? The answer is a simple one — No.

Why, then, do the governments of the world, including the Soviet Union, display such moral outrage toward the South African government? The answer to this question is simple, also — because it is politically convenient. They are motivated not by

moral or ethical concerns, but public opinion polls. The Dalhousie Board of Governors did not vote for divestment on humanitarian grounds. They acted out of fear of a wave of misinformed, protesting students. A cynic might even suggest that Messrs. Murphy and Conrad were thinking of economics rather than morals when they were inspired to pen their eloquent diatribe.

It is ironic that Dalhousie, a liberal institution based on rights and freedoms for all, has become the platform for one side of a very complex issue. At a recent lecture, Mr. Stevan Ellis, a student representative on the Board of Governors, was invited to speak about the South African regime, which he found 'morally wrong and reprehensible'. Also present was Dr. Tim Shaw, of the International Development Studies Department. He seemed to advocate any change in South Africa, whether it be peaceful or violent. Dr. Shaw's solution would indeed end Apartheid — Black South Africans would all be dead.

Apartheid is wrong, of course. Any form of institutionalized racism that denies basic rights and freedoms is. However, I believe that South Africa needs slow change — not violent revolution. I object strongly to Mr. Ellis and others who advocate divestment. Ruining the South African economy is no way to help the repressed people gain their freedom. I strongly object to those who call for violent revolution. Being free and dead seems to be an unfortunate alternative to peaceful change. I believe the South African government will dismantle Apartheid. It will not do so because of Jeffrey Murphy, or Stephen Conrad, or Stevan Ellis, or Dr. Shaw, or the Board of Governors, or every nation on earth. It will do so when it feels

that South Africa will not be plunged into the kind of tribal bloodbath that has scarred so many African nations before. Apartheid is wrong, yes. So is exploiting its vulnerability to appease one's voters, or one's pocketbook. Therefore, the 'right-minded' student, to quote Lillian Hellman, will not cut the cloth of his beliefs to fit this year's fashions.

Brewster Smith

Flee speech

To the Editor,

In response to "Commentary: SDI", in January 23rd's *Gazette*.

Jamie Glazov is entitled to his opinion on the merits of Reagan's Strategic Defense Initiative, or Star Wars. But he's not entitled to dismiss Star Wars opponents as ignorant and naive.

Mr. Glazov protests that peace activists approach the defenders of Star Wars in an overly condescending manner (I'm assuming that's what he means by the neologism "archodescension"). Yet that said he builds his own defense of Star Wars on a series of condescending insults of peace activists. According to Mr. Glazov peace activists "don't really know what the whole thing is about." They act simply because "it feels good to be doing something for peace" and because "there must be a certain satisfaction received from holding the same view as the gentlemen sitting in the Soviet Politburo."

I'm afraid we've heard it all too often: peace activists are naive dogooders and communists. I suggest that if Jamie Glazov is sincere, if he really wants to shed greater light on the Star Wars debate, that silly, personal (and not very original) insults of this kind are not the way to go about

it. To re-phrase Mr. Glazov's own rhetorical question: is this why we have freedom of speech — to treat serious opponents in the debate unfairly?

Philip Savage
Gazette reader

Correction

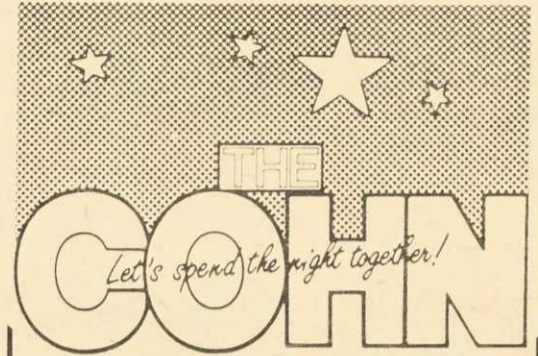
To the editor,

I have a slight correction for

John Pitt's article on CKDU-FM, 97.5 (Jan. 30).

News from the World Service of BBC Radio can be heard not "three times during the week", but three times daily on weekdays (8 am, 11 am, and 5 pm) and once daily on Saturdays and Sundays at 11 am.

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