

...But Names Will Never Hurt Me

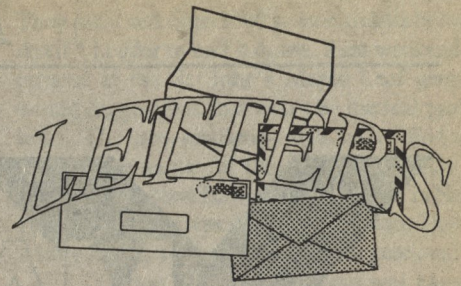
Canadians have the often dubious habit of copying the ideas of their American neighbours. This can range from gobbling billions and billions of American McBurgers to ominous talk of adopting American laissez-faire policies regarding the financial maintenance of our country's health care system. A large part of this influence stems from the power of the media, especially television, the bulk of which is controlled or produced by Americans. One distinctly American phenomenon that cable television makes available to us is negative political advertising, publicity that concentrates on destroying the character of one's political opponent rather than addressing the issues as such. One has only to look back at the recent American presidential campaign for such inspiring examples as the Republicans publicizing such irrelevant tripe as Clinton's draft-dodging during the Vietnam War. It would be easy to look at this and breathe a faintly smug sigh of relief since Canadian politics usually avoid character assassination and mudslinging, past elections having been fought on the basis of issues like free trade; however, our southern neighbours haven't cornered the market on dirty pool. A sampling of recent political advertising on Canadian airwaves would give you an ample earful of political venom. Stranger still, this recent volley of cheap shots is originating in our own island of political tranquillity, P.E.I. A provincial election is in the offing, and the contenders have come out of the gate with some rather negative political advertising.

Most disturbing is the advertising conduct of the Progressive Conservative party. If you've been tuning into popular local radio stations, odds are that you've been hearing some rather nasty potshots at the Liberal party. Some of it talks about unemployment and poverty and asks who will feed the children, with the crying of an infant added to the background just to tug at our heartstrings a bit more. One of the tamer P.C. ads is a 'live report' from a budget speech by the Liberal finance minister in which those in attendance laugh hysterically at the predictions of a balanced budget with a small surplus. The picture that emerges of the P.C. platform is that the Liberals are bad. Deep political philosophy it isn't.

One can't help but be disappointed. Pat Mella, one thinks, could scarcely be considered the nastiest lady alive. She's never been the slickest political operator, but she's proven a fairly competent spokesperson for her party despite her status as a political novice. An observer would be more likely to accuse Mella of blandness than political ruthlessness, but the bitter advertising campaign is there nonetheless. The question then is to what extent does Mella dictate the policies and tactics of her party. Mella herself has shown some positive initiative in dealing with issues in this campaign by appearing at "town-hall" meetings to address voter's concerns. It is then both surprising and disappointing to see the Conservative ad campaign taking cheap shots at the liberals instead of putting forth their own political agenda.

Negative ad campaigns can only yield negative results. Bashing the liberals doesn't tell voters anything about the policies of the Conservatives or why we should elect them, and as such serve no useful purpose beyond damaging the reputation of opponents...a pragmatic strategy but not really exemplary of the integrity we naively expect from those who seek to lead us. The virtual stranglehold that Liberals have on Island politics may promote desperation in the opposition parties but that doesn't excuse this embarrassing and unproductive conduct. Since the opposition parties are virtual non-entities on P.E.I. of late, they would profit far more from promoting themselves than attacking the government, and we would be far better served by information on opposition policies than the kind of mudslinging the Conservatives have been experimenting with. To paraphrase the old saying: if you can't say anything useful, don't say anything at all.

Sean McQuaid
Editor-in-Chief



X-Press,

I am writing this letter in response to an article on animal testing which appeared in the February 4th edition of your newsmagazine. I believe this article originated in Quebec, but regardless of its birthplace, no mention was made anywhere in the magazine regarding the more relevant issue of animal abuse that is taking place right here, in the A.V.C.'s heavily guarded laboratories.

Why was there no mention in your magazine that the Atlantic Veterinary College practices much of the same types of tortures on animals as those described in the article, minus the bleach? These facts are more than relevant to students who study and sometimes live next door to A.V.C. Perhaps if more students were fully informed on this situation than perhaps they would make the decision to end this crime and I say crime because a rose by any other name is still a rose.

In short, I hope to see coverage of this issue at some of the upcoming editions of your newsmagazine.

Action is often a prerequisite of change,

John Enman

Dear Editor,

Recently, while lounging in the Psychology Department, I read the minutes from the last Senate meeting. I was quite amazed that time is still being spent discussing the MacLean's rankings. The officials of the university should pay more attention to internal issues and stop worrying about what a less than reputable magazine has to say. Although I did not write this letter to discuss MacLean's, by offering the following script, taken from one of this university's course textbooks, perhaps I can provide a final word on the MacLean's issue and, at the same time, introduce some issues that the faculty and administration might do well to address.

The specific characteristics and background of a student and the specific nature of the institution are more important in determining intellectual growth than the general category the institution fits into...a great deal of the impact that any college might have on its students depends on the availability of professors as mentors and role models. This is particularly crucial in whether the student will become open to other viewpoints and to intellectual con-

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