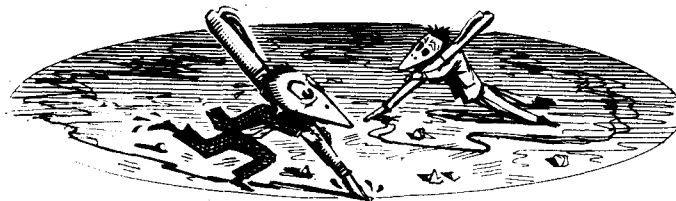


THE CAMPUS



FAST TIMES AT DARTMOUTH HIGH

by Malcolm Gladwell

Sometimes even the *Dartmouth Review* outdoes itself. A week after ten of its staffers were involved in a bizarre 3 a.m. sledgehammer attack on a shantytown erected by Dartmouth anti-apartheid demonstrators, the controversial conservative student newspaper quoted Horace: "Mix a little foolishness with your serious plans: It's lovely to be silly at the right moment."

The truth is, however, that the group—which dubbed itself the Dartmouth Committee to Beautify the Green Before Winter Carnival—was silly at precisely the wrong moment. To begin with, the raid was carried out on the night of Martin Luther King Day. And although leaders of the group later claimed their timing was sheer coincidence, the symbolism was inescapable. For Dartmouth's vocal minority student groups, which had staged a candlelight march to the shantytown hours before, this was racism.

Left alone, the shanties would most likely have died of natural causes. In November, when they were erected by the Dartmouth Community for Divestment, they had been the center of attention. By mid-January they were not. "The spirit that surrounded the construction of the shanties has faded and support of the DCD has dwindled," editorialized the daily *Dartmouth*, the college's other paper, on the day before the attack. Even as the Anti-Shanties were rounding up sledgehammers for their night on the college green, in fact, DCD members were meeting to decide whether to dismantle the shanties themselves. "We weren't hanging out there much anyway," a DCD spokesman said. "It's winter time and we were worried about our health." By making a victim out of the DCD, the *Review* gave it new life. Says history professor Charles Wood, "The attack united the whole community regardless of where they stood on divestment before."

Thus the demolition team ended up doing more damage to itself than

anything else. "I wouldn't do it again because I see how many people took it," says Les Grant, who calls himself the first black ever to write for the *Review*. At least one member of the Committee to Beautify the Green has resigned from the *Review* out of remorse, and all twelve members of the squad have been suspended from the college. Managing editor Debbie Stone says she "can't walk across campus without people screaming obscenities at me." The paper's advertising revenue has suffered. Peter Arnold, who resigned as executive editor of the *Review* last year, says simply: "The *Review* can no longer look to any significant sector of the college for support."

No one on the Committee to Beautify the Green ever thought things would get so out of control. The students rolled up the green in a flat-bed truck, planning to dismantle the shacks leisurely and distribute the wood to area charities as heating fuel for the needy. "My major concern," says Stone, "was making it back for my 10 o'clock class."

But what was conceived as a morning-long operation lasted just five minutes, and what began as "trash

removal" soon took on the dimensions of a war crime. "This was a vile, destructive act," Dartmouth professor Thomas Roos told the *Washington Post* the next day. "It was brown-shirt bullying on the order of Kristallnacht," the night in 1938 when the Nazis burned down Jewish shops and synagogues. At a teach-in later in the week, students struggled to come to terms with the broader moral implications of the five-minute morning assault. Sean O'Hearn, '87, asked his fellow classmates: "Are you, my friends, willing to deal with the racism in your hearts, the sexism, the classism, and oops, here's the tough one, homophobia, okay?"

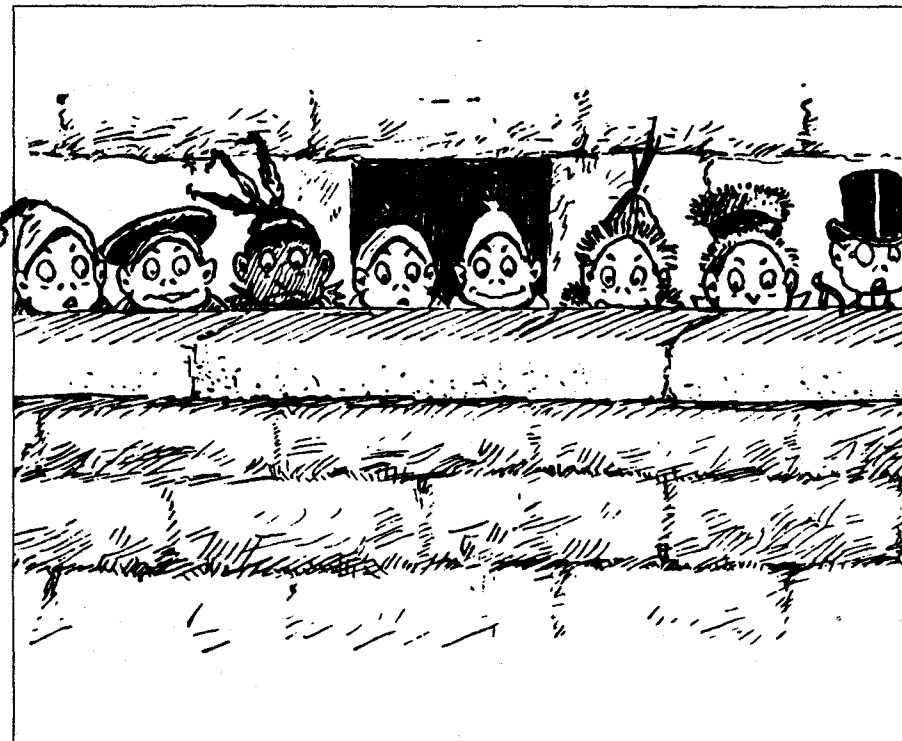
At the root of the controversy, say both students and faculty, is a lack of leadership from the dean and the president which has created an anything-goes atmosphere at Dartmouth. The administration's failure to punish acts of vandalism in the past may have led the Reviewers to believe that they could vandalize the shanties and get away with it. At the same time it was a failure of leadership on the part of the college that made the

shanties an issue in the first place.

The DCD erected the shanties over a November weekend to provide a symbol of the consequences of the college's investment policies for visiting trustees. Dean Edward Shanahan okayed the construction of a single structure so long as it was built on a corner of the college green. The students built two in the middle. The dean then demanded that the DCD dismantle the shacks by Sunday. They defied him again. At that point Shanahan instructed the campus police to remove the shantytown at 7 a.m. Monday, but half an hour before that deadline he reversed himself. A few days later President David McLaughlin returned from a business trip. He said he'd "prefer" if the shanties came down, but didn't set a particular time limit, muttering incoherently about "honest dialogue" and that the college, "if not encouraging" the protesters, should "at least be participating in the spirit of their activities."

Shanahan and McLaughlin didn't stop trying to remove the shanties. Later in November they announced that they would turn off the floodlights they had set up on the green to illuminate the shacks. Fifteen minutes after a group of protesters gathered outside his window singing "We Shall Overcome," Shanahan buckled again. Even when he actually was tough, he ended up looking incompetent. When members of the DCD occupied his offices at Parkhurst Hall for almost four hours in January, he brought them before the college disciplinary committee. But the problem was that Shanahan didn't understand the college's sit-in regulations, and in the resulting confusion the committee was forced to the ridiculous verdict that the protesters were guilty as charged but blameless by reason of their moral conviction. Shanahan decided to get serious. From the beginning he had been providing the shantytown with round-the-clock police protection. Now he cut that to hourly spot checks.

With college sympathies fully behind DCD, Shanahan was walking softly and carrying a small stick. "I'm not



Malcolm Gladwell is assistant editor at the Ethics and Public Policy Center.

sure the administration is in a position to dictate to us what to do," anti-apartheid activist George Bourozikas told *Insight* magazine. "It's not their decision. It's ours." The day after the raid the DCD joined with the Afro-American Society, gay and lesbian groups, and other student organizations to form the "Dartmouth Alliance against Racism and Oppression" and staged another illegal sit-in at Parkhurst Hall. This one lasted thirty hours. Did the administration press charges against the protesters this time? Not a chance. "We demanded amnesty," one student leader said. "We had to take over because the job that had to be done was not being done. We shouldn't be punished, we should be paid."

The administration proved so malleable that they, not the sledgehammer squad, became the focus of the controversy. The Alliance did not picket the offices of the *Dartmouth Review* and made only brief mention of the paper in its manifesto. "Our beef," says Joe Leake, chairman of the Dartmouth Afro-American Society, "is with the administration." The Alliance wanted to score points off Shanahan and McLaughlin for the rest of its agenda—an annual Martin Luther King Day teach-in, increasing recruitment of Hispanics, the handicapped, "and other traditionally oppressed groups other than blacks and Native Americans," and "adjudicable" Principles of Community—whatever that means.

Leo Rosten observed years ago that so far as he could see student radicals were really looking for adults—adults to confront, to oppose, and to emulate. At Dartmouth College, it seems, the problem is that there are no adults to be found.

Today the shanties are gone, removed when McLaughlin and Shanahan dispatched a fork-lift, pneumatic drills, and police to the green in a belated authoritarian spasm. But the fact remains that throughout the three-month controversy the administration was distinguished by its weakness, and this made neither right nor left happy. DCD activist Eric Ness was always certain that the shan-

ties were illegal, even when the president and the dean were not so sure. "It was a protest," he says simply, and a protest needs rules to break. The discipline committee ruling that left his group guilty but blameless, Ness says, "set a dangerous precedent. It means that anyone can go in and occupy Parkhurst and get away with it." And where does that leave civil disobedience?

For her part, Debbie Stone says her group acted only because the administration was "paralyzed with fear." What is really needed in dealing with campus disobedience is a firm hand. "It's like Soviet expansionism," she says of the protest on the Dartmouth Green. "If you don't stop it immediately, it just keeps growing." □

THE NATION'S PULSE



THE PHIL AND VLAD SHOW

by Tory Stempf

Seattle—"The Phil Donahue Show" gave a new twist to international relations here on December 29. Two-hundred Seattleites led by Donahue engaged via satellite for over two hours in a "Citizens' Summit" with 200 Soviets from Leningrad ("ordinary citizens," we were assured by Marilyn O'Reilly, the Donahue consultant who hand-picked both audiences). The Russian end was handled by Soviet commentator Vladimir Posner, the dapper Americanist with the Brooklynese accent who frequently appears in this country on television news shows like "Nightline."

Why was Seattle chosen for this goodwill mission? Perhaps because the place displays a certain savvy for what's called a "person to person" approach to foreign affairs. Populism, progressivism, and internationalism run strong here. Two years ago, for instance, the electorate passed Initiative 28, which pledged the city to lobby against American military aid to Central America and amounted to an endorsement of the Sandinista regime in Nicaragua. Since then, Central American "scholars" in the employ of the revolutionary left have been invited into private and public schools to give history lessons to our children.

Tory Stempf is a writer living in Seattle.

"Friendship delegations" blessed by the city's ecumenical Church Council traipse back and forth regularly between here and our "sister city" Managua, and the city council recently proclaimed Seattle an official "sanctuary city" for Central American refugees. On the European front, the citizenry sends "peace choirs" and plans for a "peace park" to the Soviet Union. In sum we are, as a local reporter crowed with typical imprecision, "the only local jurisdiction in the U.S. with its own foreign policy."

Given these predilections, it was no surprise that some local human rights groups like the Jewish Federation of Greater Seattle, the World Without War Council, and the Polish Home Association picketed KING-TV's studio and passed out "fact sheets" to arriving summitters. Excluded from the audience by O'Reilly in order to maintain "balance" and eliminate "propaganda," they were (to put it mildly) concerned that the audience wouldn't ask the "tough" questions. Statements from KING general manager and v.p. Sturges Dorrance, who wanted to "put human faces behind the superpowers" and "stick to human issues," didn't help. Everything pointed to a whitewash in the making.

So it was quite a shock when the Seattle delegation came out swinging,

demanding explanations for Soviet policy on Jewish emigration, Afghanistan, SS-20s in Europe, Sakharov, human rights. With little prompting from Posner the Lenin-graders counterattacked with their own familiar hit list of capitalist sins, producing a staccato, in-your-face sort of exchange that was mostly boring, never edifying, and ultimately, for both audiences, terribly frustrating.

The problem, it seems, was politics. "It was directed too much toward political issues that we can't solve," complained a Boeing mechanic. "And that put everybody on the defensive." Another participant said, "I think the time would have been better spent getting to know what the Russian people are really like and having them get to know what we're really like, too." Applause in both camps. Everyone had wanted "more one-to-one human interaction."

Granted, few personal views were exchanged about abortion, careers, child-rearing, or marriage. But this is not to say that nothing was revealed. To begin with, the Soviet audience was struck by what Donahue called our "preoccupation with restrictions on the Soviet citizens"; and surely bewildered, maybe appalled, by American eagerness to ex-

coriate our own country's behavior, usually in the guise of neutrality and evenhandedness. (Yes, one earnest young Seattleite conceded, both superpowers do perpetrate atrocities upon an innocent world, and he "opposes" both.) A Party *apparatchik* must also have been relieved to find that so many Americans despise politics for being a barrier to "mutual understanding."

The American complaint of "disappointment" is more problematic. If the Seattle summitters failed to meet a "real" Russian, then surely reality was at fault; it's certain that they didn't meet whom they expected—not, that is, someone like themselves, "just another human being." Instead they met Otherness, in the form of *Homo sovieticus*. For example, there was the matter of that instinctive Russian patriotism that made our yen for self-flagellation look so . . . well, *modern*. Indeed, the only Soviet gesture in this direction was some mention or other of a polluted lake. The lack of Soviet "candor," Donahue was to reflect later, was his only disappointment in the summit venture.

Of course, other unsettling aspects of "Soviet man" emerged as well: dogmatic, a bit paranoid, imbued with a sense of the wartime past that armors him against outside criticism; badly misinformed (though he accused the