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Sociology Class

An Experiment In Overcrowding

by *Gerald van Gorp
and Paul MacRae*

A soc 100 class is an experi-
ment in overcrowding. On a typi-
cal day the 500 students in the
class fill the 450 seats in the
Kings College classroom, stand
in the aisle, sit on windowsills
lining the room. They spill over
into the vestibule and exit doors.

About 20 minutes of class time
is spent cramming all those
people into the room. After an
hour the air is hot and stuffy,
so there's another five minute
break. Half the kids leave. Those
that stay spend another 10 minutes
just getting out at the end of class.

In a two hour period the pro-
fessor lectures for an average
of 45 minutes. Just passing out
papers may take up to 30 minutes.

The students aren't the only
ones dissatisfied. Prof. Jack
Spanagel, who teaches the course,
describes the situation as "out-
rageous."

"To put 500 lungs, breathing
air in a confined space with
inadequate ventilation, and to
expect even a modicum of com-
munication and use of the mind
on the part of the students, is
outrageous," he told the Gazette.

"To charge tuition money for
the privilege of doing so is aca-
demic piracy."

Arts and science dean Guy Mac-
Lean said last week that the
NDY letter was factually correct.
University president Henry Hicks
was in England and unavailable
for comment.

MacLean said the administra-
tion was negotiating to move the
class to the King's College gym-
nasium or the McInnes Room of
the Dal SUB.

However a SUB operations board
ruling prohibits academic classes
in the building.

The classes will be reduced
after Christmas when the Anthro-
pology segment branches off.
There may be 250 students in
those classes.

But that still doesn't answer
the question of why this class,
and others like it, are so over-
crowded.

As the NDY letter points out,
each of the 850 students taking
the course has paid \$100 tuition
per course. In return they re-
ceive what amounts to one week-
ly lecture through a sound system,
in an environment which no one
believes is conducive to learning
anything.

The administration can hardly
blame the overcrowded condi-
tions on a greater enrollment

than expected. Almost identical
situations have existed in first
year Soc courses in past years.

As the NDY points out, the uni-
versity can hardly be taking its
function of education seriously if
it allows students new to the
university to undergo this kind of

atrocities.

Where does all that money -
the extra \$250,000 - go? And
what interests determine where
it goes? The students and faculty?
Or outside interests which use
the university as a place to get
research done, and a source of

highly trained - but not "educa-
ted" - manpower?

These are questions that must
be answered, and issues that must
be examined, before we will get
to the root of the reason why
some students get a raw deal and
others don't.

NO. 1

AN OPEN LETTER TO HENRY HICKS:

Dear Mr. Hicks:

By now you are no doubt aware of the intolerable condi-
tions which characterize Sociology 100. There are approximately 850
undergraduates enrolled in this course. Due to the sheer size of the
class it has been found necessary to divide the class into two sections
of 550 and 300. This, however, is hardly sufficient. Any sort of edu-
cation cannot take place when you have to stand over a hundred feet
from your professor, for TWO hours.

All of us paid you \$610.00 a few weeks ago, Mr. Hicks, \$57.00
of this went to the student union and other fees. \$553.00 went
to you. Assuming all of the students in Sociology 100 are carrying
the normal five courses, they each paid you \$110.60 for that course
alone. All 850 of them together paid you a total of \$94,010.00 for
Soc. 100.

But, Mr. Hicks, you have said that tuition fees account for only
30% of the university budget. The remaining 70% is comprised of gov-
ernment funding and private grants. The taxpayers of Nova Scotia,
through the generosity of the Nova Scotia government, pay you at least
\$1,000.00 per year for every undergraduate student at Dalhousie. Ass-
uming an average load of five classes for each student, Nova Scotians
pay Dalhousie \$200.00 for every class that every undergraduate student
is taking. Now, there are 850 students in Sociology 100. The people
of Nova Scotia pay you \$170,000.00 for Sociology 100. With provincial
revenues of \$170,000.00 and tuition revenues of \$94,010.00, Sociology
100 received a total of \$264,010 this year. Even assuming that it
costs you \$14,000.00 to hire a professor, Mr. Hicks, that still leaves
you with \$250,010.00, and us with 849 classmates, all scrambling for
the same seat.

You stated at orientation, Mr. Hicks, that 2/3 of the freshman
class would not complete their first year. Classes like Soc. 100 are
more than enough reason for any sane individual to leave these hallow-
ed halls. Certainly it is not asking too much for you to use that
\$250,010.00, to hire more professors and teaching assistants. Certain-
ly you aren't using the high rate of failure in the freshman year to
cancel out the university debt, by economizing on classroom space and
salaries. Certainly this university wants to give us the best edu-
cation possible. Certainly you'll do something to rectify this un-
bearable overcrowding. Certainly.

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Meeting

Wed: 11:30