

you were saying

Gazette offends, Hill apologizes

To the Editor:

(The following is a copy of a letter sent to The Honorable T. Donahoe, Minister of Education)

Dear Mr. Donahoe:

It has been brought to my attention that the Dalhousie Gazette of March 8th, 1984, contained a cartoon that in the opinion of many, including myself, could be described as offensive and uncalled for. The cartoon depicts a student candidate for political office directing an offensive comment at you.

I wish to apologize on behalf of our Student Union for this cartoon. It in no way characterizes our opinion of you in particular or your office in general.

As a past union president yourself I'm sure you are aware of the manner of relationship existing between student union councils and the press they financially support. The editorial policy of the Gazette is not set by, nor does it reflect the opinions of, the Student Union Council at Dalhousie.

I hope you will accept our sincere apologies.

Faithfully,
Tim Hill
President

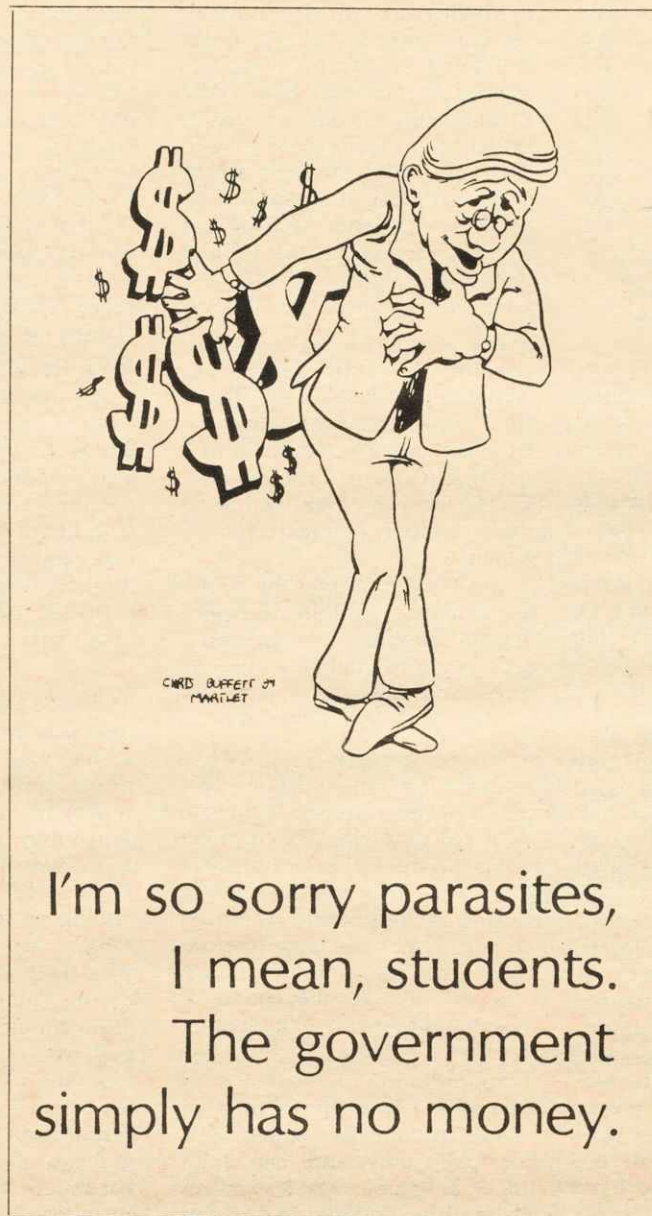
Lunge, parry and thrust

To the Editor:

As a regular reader of the Gazette's letters and editorials page, I feel I must comment on a disturbing phenomenon of the past few months.

It started before Christmas with a letter from one Mr. Charles Spurr, which publicly denounced nuclear proliferation, the Canadian government's foreign aid strategies and miscellaneous other aspects of our "imperialist" society.

Enter Mr. Peter F. Dawson, 3rd Yr. Political Science (Hons.), boldly coming to the rescue of the Imperialists and chiding Mr. Spurr for his woefully misguided opinions. Mr. Spurr, naturally, could not let the Communist side down, so he wrote an excoriating reply and from then on it was all attack and counterattack, lunge, parry and thrust.



I'm so sorry parasites,
I mean, students.
The government
simply has no money.

Recently, Mr. Dawson has diversified his attack, dragging medical students, the Gazette and even 'Clockwork Orange' into the fray. The latest letters column of the Gazette consists entirely of a letter by Mr. Dawson and a letter about Mr. Dawson. Come now, fellas, isn't this a bit much?

I don't wish to discourage freedom of expression, but perhaps Mr. Spurr and Dawson could find a more suitable forum for their debate. I don't know if these two have ever met (and somehow I don't think they have) but I would like to suggest that they have it out over a couple of beers in the Grawood and leave the letters column open for commentaries of a less personal nature.

Sincerely,
Mark Feldbauer
Martinus van der Lubbe International
Firebombing Society

Ignorance not bliss

To the Editors:

With regards to your article that appeared in the March 22 edition of *The Gazette*, it is not surprising to find relations between our two institutions at a low point. Isolation stems from misunderstanding and ignorance and your reporter, Bob Morrison, more than ably demonstrates both in his somewhat less than accurate reference to the executive of the King's Student Union.

Who is Mike LeBlanc? His campaign for President was less than high profile, indeed he does not exist. Surely Mr. Morrison's article lacks credibility when the only input from King's was from a non-existent President.

Our sincere congratulations to Alex Gigeroff and Rusty James on their victory in the Dalhousie Student Union elections. We look forward to working with them in the near future.

Yours Truly,
Mark "Mike" MacKenzie
President, King's College Student Union
and James LeBlanc-MacKenzie
Former Vice-President External
King's Student Union

We wish to apologize to Leone Steele, Mike Hayes and John Davie at Dal Photo for forgetting to credit their photos in the March 22/84 issue.

commentary

by Donald D. Betts

In Canada during the past four or five years, universities have found themselves in steadily worsening financial difficulties. In most Canadian universities enrolments have increased each year throughout the 80's; in Maritime universities enrolments have increased 25% during the past four years. These additional students would fill a university the size of the University of New Brunswick, the second biggest university in the Maritimes. At the same time governments have been decreasing their financial support for universities in real terms; annual "increases" in government grants have in fact been annual decreases when inflation is taken into account. Boards of Governors, faculty, staff and students alike at universities in Nova Scotia are well aware of and sympathetic to the financial plight of the provincial government with its substantial and increasing debt. However provincial governments in recent years have been assigning a decreasing fraction of their budgets to post secondary education. In Nova Scotia in 1977 post secondary education received 7.3% of the provincial budget while in 1982 support had declined to 5.7%. I suggest there

is a paradox here. The people of Canada are voting with their feet—they are saying clearly, through enrolling in universities in ever increasing numbers, that university education is a high and increasing priority in their lives. The governments of Canada are voting with their pocketbooks—they are saying equally clearly, through starving the universities financially, that university education is a low decreasing priority for governments.

What have been the reactions of universities to diminishing financial support from governments? Universities first priority is to maintain their level of service by a variety of financial measures. Research grants and contracts have been eagerly sought for their overhead, alumni have been canvassed vigorously for annual gifts, major capital fund drives have been launched by several universities, and regrettably students' fees have been increasing at a rate exceeding inflation. Universities have been vigilant in reducing waste and eliminating inessential non-academic operations. In Nova Scotia and other provinces which permit it, universities have gone into debt to support their academic activities. Finally universities have been cooperating more than ever before to share resour-

ces and to rationalize programmes wherever that is feasible; such cooperation is particularly noticeable in the Halifax area. Nevertheless each of these measures is of limited effect and all of them together have been unable to compensate completely for increasingly inadequate government support.

What then has been the effect on education of a real decrease in the available financial resources on a per student basis? Universities strive both to maintain standards of instruction and to maintain accessibility to all qualified students in the face of financial adversity. Up until now there have been few limits on enrollment as universities have opted instead for a gradual, not very noticeable, erosion of standards of instruction. At Dalhousie, for example, class sizes have increased slowly each year as numbers of students have increased while numbers of faculty members have decreased due to partial nonreplacement of those who resign or retire. Some low enrollment classes have been cancelled. More and more instruction is given by part time faculty members hired on a per course basis. Such part-timers are difficult for students to find outside lectures, sometimes are not

fully qualified and often have other full-time occupations which command their primary loyalty. In laboratory science courses equipment is gradually becoming outdated, inadequate in quantity and more and more often in need of repair. In Nova Scotia the situation worsened suddenly in August 1982 when the government cancelled universities' non space capital (equipment) grants for 1982-83 and failed to restore such grants for 1983-84. Non space capital grants are also required for the acquisition of library books and periodicals, another essential but declining resource. The inadequate governments operating grants have had the further effect of preventing universities from purchasing adequate amounts of scientific supplies such as chemicals and biological specimens for undergraduate laboratories. In my opinion and that of many of my colleagues at Dalhousie University further erosion of standards of instruction is not acceptable.

The Association of Atlantic Universities has recommended that government grants to universities in 1984-85 increase by 12.6% over 1983-84 and the MPHEC has recommended a 9.0% increase for Maritime uni-

versities. If the 1984-85 grants to Nova Scotia universities do not increase by at least six percent significant limitations will have to be placed on first year enrolment in Arts and Science at Dalhousie on a Faculty-wide basis. There were already at Dalhousie in 1983-84 limitations on enrollment in first year Engineering and Education and second year Geology and Computing Science. In addition enrollment in first year courses in English, French and German reached capacity at an early stage last fall and dozens of students were turned away to seek admission to classes in other Departments. Next year Biology, Chemistry, Mathematics and Philosophy will also have enrollments limitations and other Departments may be forced to follow suit. I understand the situation is not very different in other universities. Surely it is unwise for governments to continue the financial squeeze on universities. Surely it is unfair for a newspaper to comment, as the Chronicle-Herald did editorially on March 17, that universities are "using students as pawns in their negotiations with governments."

Donald D. Betts has been Professor of Physics and Dean of Arts and Science at Dalhousie University since 1980.