

# CATHARSIS

By Neil Harrison

The Constitution of the Canadian University Press asserts that "the major role of the student press is to act as an agent of social change... striving to emphasize the rights and responsibilities of the student citizen".

As a statement of principle, it is almost universally acceptable and could conceivably be adopted by every group from the John Birch Society and the Kiwanis to the Internationalists. It therefore doesn't say much at all, and requires interpretation.

Students have rights. They are the same rights everyone is supposed to have, but they naturally apply more to the university environment and other students.

To begin with, education rightfully belongs to everyone. Universal accessibility is a myth, however. Read the relevant parts of Porter's "Vertical Mosaic" and watch the rights evaporate when lined up beside the facts. You might even start thinking that maybe the university is catering to someone or something other than the student and people in general. More on that later.

There are some students who will state with a great deal of conviction that a university education is privilege. The student pays but a fraction of the cost of his education, he doesn't finance the institution's programs, build the buildings, hire the professors or pay their salaries. I certainly won't argue with those facts; they're truisms. But the question is, who does pay the shot? Does the answer have any bearing on the kind of education we should expect as compared to the kind we're getting?

Government is a major source of the university's revenue. The government gets its cash through taxes paid by the people. Most money comes from taxes levied on the ordinary man, the worker, who makes up by far the largest portion of the population. Generally speaking, then, workers pay the vagerments share of the university's operating costs. Fact: approximately 25% of the student population come from families with incomes of over ten thousand dollars a year. These families make up only 8% of the population. It seems that a lot of workers are sending a lot of rich kids through college, while their own children drop out or get jobs to increase the family's earnings. I bet they'd be somewhat upset if they knew.

The next step is to ask why this situation exists. Is it possible that governments and the universities consider something more than the interests of the people in making decisions and setting policy???

The second major source of the university's income is business, through donations, grants, scholarship funds, etc. This is the most obvious manifestation of the involvement of business interests in the university. But what about government? Aren't most of our legislators businessmen of one sort or another? What's more important still, governments are political parties and our political parties are financed by business. Businesses have money and usually support political causes which guarantee their continued success in making more. I really hate to sound cynical, but when you start talking about million dollar investments and multi-million dollar profits, greed usually takes precedence over humanitarian instincts.

At the risk of making a blanket statement, let's continue from the proposition that business controls the university for all intents and purposes. How does this affect what goes on here?

To begin with, take a look at the "Scholarships, Awards and Financial Aid" supplement to the university calendar. It certainly pays to be an engineer, chemist, physicist, or geologist. These are the technicians needed by business to perpetuate their profit-making activity. These are the people who "benefit" from company scholarships. A Ph.D. in Victorian Literature or Political Philosophy really doesn't have too much value to a corporation manufacturing armaments or marketing a better mousetrap.

The influence of business extends beyond these external signs into the curriculum itself and the teachers who ad-

minister it. I can't go into a lot of detail in this column. I will simply state that most courses (e.g. political science) serve mainly to rationalize and reinforce the political and social order as it now exists. They touch on problems and offer solutions without considering causes. They cover the spots on a measles patient rather than attacking the virus which is the real culprit. In short, they are not analytical.

A critical university with an analytical approach would, I feel, expose and smash the "rationale" underlying modern society in short order. That rationale is presently free enterprise - capitalism - the freedom to accumulate wealth at the expense of the people who do all the work.

Whether or not the critical university is a realistic possibility is debatable. It hardly seems likely that corporations and their governments would encourage or permit such a process to occur. What is possible is that each student might become a more critical individual. If this were to occur, through analysis of conditions as they now exist and subsequent testing of the conclusions that are drawn, the critical university might follow as the logical extension of a new society.

Having touched on the question of the student's rights, and how they are flaunted, let us continue to the "responsibilities of the student citizen".

As it now stands, the right to an education means simply the right to an "education" suited to the needs of those in control, which sure ain't us. But we've been through that before. Responsibility enters the picture when you consider what is to be done with the insights gained through individual analysis, even if at the moment this means that you accept nothing more than the fact that when it comes to education, working class kids are being screwed in the ear.

When you are faced with a question it is your responsibility to find an answer. You owe it to yourself to find out why. In addition to this personal responsibility, it is definitely not acceptable to hoard knowledge. Facts must be circulated along with interpretations based on them. University students are in a position to find out what's really going on, to make their findings known to other students and to the public and to instigate appropriate action.

We do not have to look far to find examples of people who refuse to recognize their responsibilities in this regard. Our Sociology and Political Science departments are filled with empiricist - behaviourist types who go to great lengths to obtain masses of valuable data and statistics by the purest scientific means... and then retire to the isolation of the ivory tower academic world without taking their questioning to its logical conclusion (why is what ought to be not what is?), or adopting any moral position at all.

The student's responsibility, then, is to ask questions about the university and society in general, to endure the frustration of trying to find reasonable answers, to tie everything up into some sort of coherent explanation, and finally to talk to people about it.

That all sounds pretty idealistic... wishy-washy generalities... just like the CUP statement at the beginning of this harangue. It's general because it outlines an approach rather than any specific consideration. In order to "act as an agent of social change" an individual or a newspaper must approach problems with a consistent analytical framework. We have to dig deeper than the surface facts and appearances if we are to be given any credit for logical thought, and by the same token we have to relate the problems and experiences of students to society as a whole.

This is supposed to be a column, not an editorial, so it's personalistic. I've stated some problems as I see them and a solution or two as well. What I'd like to see for openers at Dal is an end to the acutely defensive posture adopted by many students who shy away from new ideas or attack them before they know what they're all about. At least listen. Then confront these ideas with a technique of analysis... ask questions... test them and draw your own conclusions.

## Dear Mom...

I've started classes. Registration was efficient, ruthlessly so. I've had few deep revelations in class so far, but the other night, I was enlightened, and saddened, at a dance. It was typical in as much as the band, music and place were typical. I will not say all the people there were typical, for it's too early in the year for that. Yes, there were a few innocents there, and I was one of them. I had forgotten about the "system" that exists at these dances. What happened specifically? Picture it. There are a group of girls standing together on the dance floor. The music starts. One by one they are picked off, asked for a dance. Suddenly there is only one girl left. Then a guy makes his way toward her... closer... closer... then he gets a good look at her - she was not very pretty, Mom - and he veered away. To judge by looks, for external beauty, how cruel. I do not think I will go to

these dances any more. (Of course I have nothing against dancing. To move to music, holding someone you care about, holding her very close to you - this is wonderful. But to be subjected as that girl was...) I do not think I will go to these dances any more. I do not think one needs to attend this type of social function to meet people. If one is friendly, open, and sincere, one is sure to find friends, to find someone special. Much as I said in my last letter, in spite of all the planned events of this nature there were still a lot of lonely people around.

There are no tears, perhaps, just words drenched in guilt.

For it's a search with no paths.

But when the marigold's stem breaks is crushed under the burden of beauty a hand unnatural to it is always there.

Rick

## SENATE

How many people know that Dalhousie has open senate meetings? How many of those who do know, attend? Anyone attending the senate's last meeting would have to conclude that the answer to both these questions is - very few. Even the radical contingent (alias the Left), despite never-ending cries of "More student participation", were absent from the room. Granted these regular get-togethers of our venerable academic fathers seldom fill anyone with revolutionary zeal - but wouldn't it be a good idea to observe an important part of the decision - making progress despite the fact that, as yet, we, as students, play no meaningful part in it.

In the last meeting of Senate a number of important topics came under discussion, including Dalhousie's relationship with Nova Scotia Technical College and Mount Saint Vincent University. After some discussion it was moved that Dalhousie seat four members on the Tech. senate and that Tech. would reciprocate, subject, of course, to ratification by Tech.

When the chairman introduced the next item on the agenda he did an excellent job of conserving words - he said nothing. The item involved an agreement with the Mount. By way of introduction he

said only that he thought the agreement was somewhat the same as the existing agreement with Tech. and shortly afterward he called for a motion ratifying the Mount agreement. The chairman mentioned after the motion had been passed that certain steps had already been taken in anticipation of the Senate's favourable response. Many people feel that this is another step toward the formation of a University of Halifax which would probably include all the institutions now in operation in the area.

Turning to other business, Bruce Gillis, one of the student representatives on the Senate, raised a question concerning student membership on the Senate Council. He was told that a motion had already been passed providing for the election, by the Senate, of one of the student reps. to the council. This was questioned by other members and the secretary was instructed to check back minutes to see if a formal motion to this effect had been passed.

For those who think that education is more than football games and passing grades it might be wise to drop into the occasional Senate meeting. They are held on the second Monday of each month at four o'clock p.m.

## Letter to the Editor

The time has come for us to sit back and evaluate what has been said in the last two issues of the Gazette. Any individual not familiar with the Dalhousie campus would think the students are prepared to break free from their inveterate backwardness, and come to grips with the prevailing social, economic and political problems. Having been involved with much of what has transpired, I find it necessary to render a more sober appraisal of the situation.

A great deal of the energy expended to date has been directed toward everything but the initiation of constructive change. Personalistic arguments, petty jurisdictional squabbles, and hairsplitting legalistic bickerings are emphasized for the simple reason of clouding over the issues at hand. This is nothing but a pusil-

lanimous act on the part of those fearful of exposing their true political positions. I am left no alternative but to reify what has degenerated into a game of abstractions.

If you re-read the statements released by the D.A.G.S. Council, you will see that we at no time wished to become involved with mud-slinging. At no time did we come to the point of releasing meaningless statements such as "Mr. Katz is known to suffer from a recurring illness called verbal diarrhea." Such a statement means nothing and once again retreats from the issues being discussed. Instead of responding to my criticism of Mr. Gillis' actions, the writer of that statement attempts to prejudice an audience still unaware of the significance of CUS and Mr. Gillis' attempt to disband it. It is this

very trick of side-stepping the real nature of CUS which was used last year by the mass media and student councils across Canada to disenchant students. It is no wonder repressive social and economic conditions seem immune to change. Exploitation of emotions and lack of intellectual honesty inhibit critical assessment. Unfortunately, the satisfied minority realizes critical evaluation is the first stage of political action.

The Canadian Union of Students has been working for the development of the critical university. This is a goal which we as students have the power to achieve. The critical university would not be pressured by government and corporate enterprise to meet their needs, but would exercise an independent criticism of these forces which fear change. It is these forces which must be criti-

cized, for they monopolize decision making bodies, are responsible for the conditions within and without the university, and direct all benefits toward a self-satisfied minority. This domination by the corporate enterprise must cease. The establishment of the critical university would be an important step in this direction. The university would graduate socially conscious people rather than specialists incapable of synthesizing their knowledge and relating it to a broader social spectrum. The isolation of any one skill is to diminish the significance of the individual and therefore the society these individuals make up.

The concept of the critical university is the sort of thing we should be discussing in our evaluation of CUS. Have those who condemn CUS talked about the idea of the critical university? No. Nor have they discussed CUS literature and the attempts CUS has made to get local council t-

organize around their analysis of the student in the university and the student and society. It is obviously these subjects which can be used to educate students. In an interview earlier this year, I stated that if a referendum on CUS were held immediately, the results would be negative. The reason is simple; the only information students have come from gossip. An orientation program on CUS would do away with irresponsible gossip and might even prove to be an antidote to student apathy. An objective presentation of CUS policy might also be the first step toward much needed change on campus. F