

The stripping of school spirit

I came to Dalhousie three years ago from a small community in Inverness County, Cape Breton. There were 32 students in my graduating class and I knew everybody in my high school by name. Our sports teams were revered by the community. The winter carnival "royalty" made the local newspaper. The school was everything to us because it was pretty much all we had.

When government cuts to education threatened to close our school, the entire community rallied to save it. We held public meetings and demonstrations, we stayed home in protest, seven students broke in and held a lock-out. School spirit was so ingrained in us all it felt instinctive.

I came to university at the ripe old age of 17, so I was naturally a bit naive.

People told me Dal was a rather impersonal place, no one got involved and school spirit was non-existent. But I don't think I really

believed them. I couldn't even grasp the concept. I was going to take challenging courses and have stimulating conversations with profs and fellow scholars. I was going to challenge my mind and find out who I was. I was going to give my life to Dalhousie and let them mold it.

Give me a break, I was only 17.

Being a student in the biology department, my classes have ranged from 40 to 200 students. I'm lucky if my professor knows I exist. Stimulating conversation just doesn't happen. I'm little more than a name on an essay as far as they're concerned.

And then, last September, my tuition passed the dreaded \$4000 mark. I've just spent an obscene amount of money on a year that I've all but wasted on electives or unwanted courses. The courses I wanted and needed weren't offered, of course — except for the three that were offered in the same time slot.

And then — the strike. I tried to

care. The professors do deserve more than they're getting, and we need some kind of guarantee from the university to replace faculty members. I truly believe this. I should have been marching with Students for Solidarity or suing the university and the DFA.

But all I really cared about was that it came just in time to increase that end-of-year stress. And then it ended with terms that hardly seemed worth the trouble and will probably cause my tuition to rise again soon.

I'm trying desperately to hang on to some degree of school pride, but I don't feel like I'm at a school. A school is a place where education is the priority, and money is an unfortunate obstacle. Dal seems to have that backwards.

If I had half the gumption I had when I came here, I would probably have withdrawn in protest a long time ago.

NATALIE MACLELLAN

Editorial

Well, the times sure have changed since I went to kindergarten with a backpack securely strapped on my tiny shoulders and a *Muppets* lunch box clenched in my fist. I was eager to learn about where I could find England on a map and why clouds were shaped as they were. I wanted to fill my mind with as much knowledge as I could. It was all about learning. I just don't have the same yearning anymore.

The notion of 'school' that our generation has been raised on is a thing of the past. We don't have school spirit because we don't have a school. What we have is a sort of limbo — we're still too snoot-nosed to get a real job but too old to be on the road to nowhere.

That road to nowhere is somehow romantic. Long forgotten would be professors teaching you how to get a job and asking you to regurgitate the same crap they cram down your

ever-open throat. Long gone would be the worries that I may not be able to cut it beyond the academic world. I'd force myself to travel beyond these halls and then there would be no time to question every decision I would have made.

The control and lack of imagination associated with Dalhousie is far too stifling to promote real learning. It's a rare occurrence that I sit in a classroom, listen to a professor and think, "damn this is great." This is not a reflection of myself. I enjoy learning, but I don't enjoy listening to someone give me instructions on how to get a job — but this is what most people here want.

This is sad. During the strike, most people didn't care about the fact that they weren't learning; they just wanted to get back into class so they could quickly get back out and get "relevant" work experience over the

summer.

I have no affection for Dalhousie, and I doubt that my love will grow over the next two years I'll spend here. I just think it's hard to be a student in a world full of ladder-climbing junior executives and professors more than willing to give them a boost. It's hard when it's so damn easy to just scale the rungs with the rest of the rats.

Students have become consumers, whether we want to admit it or not. You want school spirit? When was the last time you attended a social gathering hosted by your local corner store? You probably had to buy something if ever such a party existed. If you see where I'm going with this, you see where Dal is going too — it's too bad that we pay too much for such a narrow, paltry service.

GREG MCFARLANE

THE DALHOUSIE GAZETTE

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All submissions must be typed double-spaced on paper, e-mailed, or on a Mac or IBM 3 1/2 inch disk, in a WP version not greater than Word 6.0 or equivalent. The deadline is Mondays at 4:30 p.m.

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Letters

Howe Hall resident strikes back

To the editor,

As a first year English student at Dal and a resident of Howe Hall, I was annoyed with Ryan Lash's contribution to the Focus section of the Apr. 2 issue of the Gazette. I was one of the many residents who enjoyed Tuesday afternoon's weather in the Howe Hall quad and I resent Lash's suggestion that our behaviour was at all immature or that we weren't concerned with the strike.

I'm not sure which part of Lash's "letter from camp"-style article bothered me the most. Maybe it was the condescending use of words like "phooey". Or perhaps it was when he referred to the complaints of "the older kids", suggesting that us younger students were "having too much fun playing Hack-E-Sack" to recognize the concerns that students (including ourselves) had about our wasted time and money. No, I think what bothered me the most was the suggestion that we, as residents of Howe, were not informed about or interested in the strike. I believe that this was suggested in such statements as, "At least, that's what I think [the professors' signs] said, I was pretty busy trying to keep my popsicle from dripping on me", and also with the idea that if the "teachers" went back to work soon, it would be fine with us since it might rain anyway and we wouldn't want our Hack-E-Sacks to shrink.

I want to tell Lash and anyone who may have been impressed by his article that just because we took some time to enjoy some rare nice weather doesn't mean that we don't care about our education or that we were uninformed about the strike. Many of the residents of Howe Hall were very concerned about the strike and how it would affect their futures. And many of those students outside that day were the same students who participated in the DSU's rally to try to give students a voice in the talks between the DFA and the administration.

I hardly think that because I read a book on a blanket outside of my residence on a sunny Tuesday afternoon it should be concluded that I was carefree about the strike situation at Dal. Just because there was a strike, it doesn't mean I should have stayed in my room studying on a perfectly beautiful day. And Lash's suggestion that Howe residents were being juvenile for enjoying a nice day is very offensive. I'm sure he was glad to be out taking his pictures on such a warm occasion.

GINA GRANTER

Get a mug to protect the environment

To the editor,

Our Health Promotion 3000 group is planning to raise the awareness of reusable Enviro mugs. It seemed apparent to us that too many styrofoam cups were being thrown away everyday. Of the 900 cups of coffee sold at the Second Cup, only one third of the customers are using Enviro mugs. Most of the local coffee shops do offer some kind of a discount when filling a reusable mug. For example, Tim Hortons offers a 10 cent discount to Enviro mug users, while the Coburg Coffee House offers a 25 cent discount.

Our group plans to start a logo contest which will be held at the beginning of each school year. Each participant's entry will consist of a logo and a mug design. The winning entry will be produced as a campus Enviro mug for the Dalhousie community to use.

Enviro mugs are an excellent alternative to cups made of styrofoam, which damage the environment and contribute to the landfill problem. What better way to show your concern for the environment than sporting an Enviro Mug!

For further information, please check out our website at <http://is2.dal.ca/~sacraig>

Sincerely,

Health Promotion 3000

Leaving for elsewhere

To the editor,

I am writing in response to a letter from Ismet Ugursal, Dalhousie Faculty Association (DFA) president, in the Apr. 2 issue of the Gazette to express my frustration with Dalhousie. First I would like to respond to Ugursal's naive comment: "all the students that I have talked to praise the individual treatment that they receive from their professors." My experience at Dalhousie could not be further from Dr. Ugursal's imagined ideal. Eighty per cent of my professors over my two year experience at Dalhousie have been reluctant to see me and other students outside of class time (even during their office hours and by appointment!). I realize my comments may be offensive to some professors, but I think the professors who see my comments as offensive are the ones my comments are directed towards.

Dalhousie is no longer the great school of learning it prides itself as. To the contrary, I feel that I am paying only for a piece of paper I receive at the end of my three year undergraduate degree. Education is no longer a priority at Dalhousie, a sad reality that must be changed. I have discussed my concerns with several members of the DFA, but these members felt a quality education has become a thing of the past. It is very difficult for a student to continue taking university seriously after hearing this from the same professors that are there to teach them. I did not support the DFA in their striking action for this very reason.

Many professors claimed the DFA's action to strike was in the students' best interests because a strike would place pressure on the administration to hire more full-time professors and stabilize the positions held by the current DFA members. I seriously question the sincerity behind the DFA's alleged motivation. I am sure a select few professors did stand for the students' best interests during the strike; however I am quite confident that no one actually believed a strike would result in favour of the students' best interests. The best interests of the students I feel are smaller class sizes, a reasonable tuition, and more opportunity to discuss with "happy" professors. Correct me if I'm wrong, but these were not the topics of interest on Apr. 1 when the administration and the DFA reached