

The Dalhousie GAZETTE

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CHRISTMAS EXAMS

The approach of the Christmas examinations affects different people in different ways, but one reaction is general: the feeling that these examinations accomplish little when compared to the time and efforts expended in preparing for them.

The first term of the academic year at Dalhousie is all too short as it is. Classes start theoretically at the beginning of October. However, in many cases it is nearly mid-October before the routine settles down to normal and students can attack their work seriously. Yet within eight weeks students are expected to write examinations covering almost a half year's work.

One result of this is that students are forced to start reviewing almost in mid-term, while at the same time keeping up with current lectures and covering the new ground exposed in these lectures. Another result, especially noticeable to those taking liberal arts courses, is that very little time can be found in which to read widely from sources other than those specifically prescribed in a course.

The retort might be made here that anyone finding the weight of work bearing them down should forget about extra-curricular and outside activities and concentrate solely on their academic studies. We disagree. Although the academic side of a university career must necessarily play the major part of a student's life, extra curricular activities also play an important role in completing an education, and the student is at university primarily to receive an all round education.

We question also the value of examination papers in which a student is asked to complete four, five, or more questions within two or even three hours. However, while we do not doubt the present necessity of judging the academic ability of a student mainly through his or her examination results, regrettable though this may be, we do have some suggestions for improving the situation, in the undergraduate schools at least.

Our first suggestion is to abolish Christmas examinations in all but the primary courses. We advocate the retention of examinations for these particular courses on the grounds that they are taken by most, if not all freshmen, and thus would afford newcomers to the university some experience of college papers before sitting the final examinations in the spring.

Another suggestion is either to increase the hours of examinations, say to five hours or to reduce the number of questions on the papers in order to permit students, especially the slower ones, to do justice to the questions

NEUTRALISM IN THE NDP

In a recent dispatch from The Canadian Press, New Democratic Party leader Tommy Douglas was quoted as saying the Canadian government's stand on Berlin was "the height of folly." Inherent in his speech was the implication that Canada should abandon its support of the United States over the Berlin question.

It becomes increasingly difficult to determine what a just stand on the Berlin question should entail; as each side hurls charges and counter-charges at other, real issues tend to become obscured. At the risk of writing the obvious, it is clear to say that the real issue is whether the city of Berlin and the country of Germany should remain in its post-war state of division. On the one hand, Russia retains its war-time fear of Germany (can they be blamed after Stalingrad?) and fears the re-armed might of West Germany; on the other hand, the Western camp has seen the menacing hand of the Soviet Union at work in taking over governments of various European countries.

But this much remains clear: the United

States has given its word to the people of West Germany and to the people of West Berlin that they shall meet with force any Soviet threat to the freedom of the divided city. They must either be prepared to fulfill their promise or be prepared to accept the Communist take-over of many European countries.

Mr. Douglas tells us that we should not support the United States in their attempt to fulfill their word. The logical conclusion of Mr. Douglas' policy is that we should not accept other positions of the Western World that are not palatable to Canada.

If this is to be the official policy of the New Democratic Party let him make it very, very clear to the Canadian people just what his policy entails. Let him make sure that Canadians are made to realize just what they are voting for if they cast a vote for his party in a federal election. For what he recommends is tantamount to neutrality.

Neutrality might perhaps be a good thing for Canada. It is certainly a morally comfortable position to adopt (allowing as it does, a country to accept or reject whatever is convenient), but we suspect were Canadians to realize the economic and political implications of neutrality, they would be very hesitant to cast a vote for it.

PROFOUND DECISIONS

Our knowledge of the origins of some of the time honoured practices in higher education does not tend to strengthen our confidence in these practices.

Consider for example the profound analysis and study which has gone into the widely accepted idea that a college education consists of four years of post high-school preparation.

The main reason for the four year course being the accepted period of time here in North America is that Harvard adopted it in 1636. Harvard adopted it because Cambridge and Oxford were using it at that time. Oxford, when it began in the middle of the 13th century, adopted it because English parents, who had been sending their sons to Paris to study informally, had decided some years earlier that four years of university study would be a reasonable length of time to stay away from home.

It is in this careful, studied, scientific fashion that we have now concluded that four years constitute a complete Bachelor's degree.

Other such well thought out decisions have been made by college administrators in recent years. Consider for example their decision to introduce courses such as Chemistry 1A, Physics 1A, and English 1A.

These courses were begun here at Dalhousie and elsewhere across the continent because the university fathers felt that too many students were failing elementary courses. Engineers for example were notoriously bad at English while the Arts and Commerce types had a dreadfully hard time trying to pass Math 1 and their Science course.

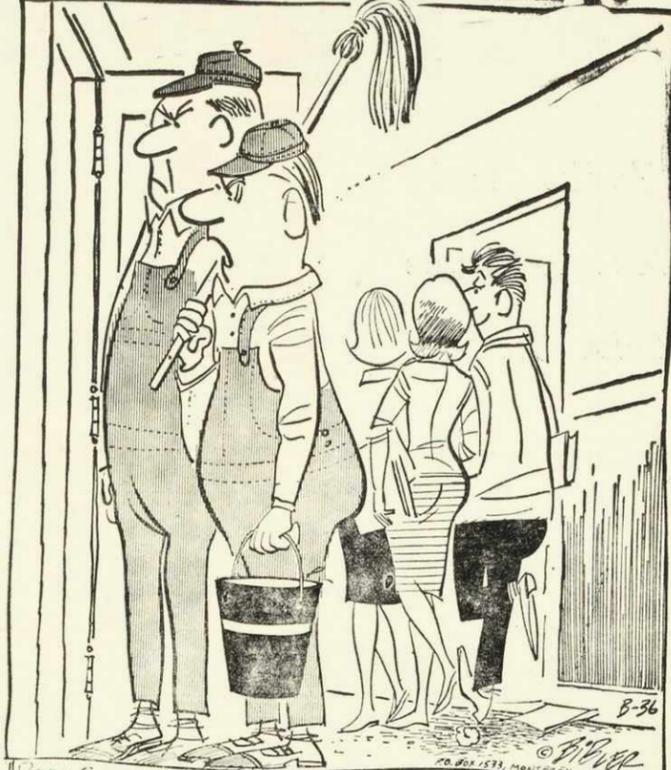
Thus it was that these new, watered down courses were introduced so the masses could still get their degrees.

It is not up to us to decide whether an Engineer needs to know any English or whether an Arts man should be able to do Mathematics; but it does seem to us a bit incongruous that the university should decide that such courses should be taught to everyone yet at the same time they are willing to lower their standards to make some of these compulsory courses quite easy.

It is decisions such as these which often make us wonder if there is not something wrong with the scientific method of reasoning.

Or is the answer simply that all our administrators are Artsmen.

LITTLE MAN ON CAMPUS



"PROF SNARF ALWAYS MANAGES TO SCARE SOMEONE WITH ONE OF THOSE SUDDEN EXAMS OF HIS."

The Critical Eye

OUR RELIGION MAKES US RICH

Thank God for a profitable religion.

The annual boom is on for the commercial interests of the Western World where Christmas is the busiest and most lucrative time of the year. Shops are decked out in their winter finery to attract eager customers in to purchase gifts at give-away prices. 'Bargains! Bargains!' scream radio and television announcers, interspersing their semi-hysterical outbursts between Christmas carols. Newspapers carry advertisements of giant clearance sales: 'Everything must go!' Even Church magazines clamber aboard the happy band-wagon to prosperity and the betterment of mankind.

Every evening for weeks Father Christmas, grand old man of the shopping centre, leaves the scene of his labors to put in an appearance at a local radio station, sponsored, oddly enough, by a non-Christian store owner.

But of course the real heart of the great and prosperous democracies cannot be expected to beat in fits and starts. Year in year out factories throughout the world are turning out everything from plastic spacemen to deluxe yachts in preparation for the Christmas boom. Japanese workmen toil long hours to produce gaudy knock-knacks for throngs of shoppers in Chicago and Montreal. French haute couture sweeps the fashion centres of London and New York. Everyone goes happily about his or her business drugged with prosperity.

The other side of the picture? Well there is a trivial matter of some thousands of Japanese students suffering from TB through lack of equipment to fight the disease: of students in Algeria spending another hungry Christmas pouring over the occasional text book which comes into their hands in the midst of

civil war: of students in Bombay and Calcutta sleeping on sacking in the gutters. But why worry? Our religion makes us rich. Let their religion look after them.

Besides, no one can say we are not doing our share in bringing enlightenment and all the material advantages of Christianity to these people. Missionaries have been going out for almost 2,000 years to carry the word of God to the heathen. Why, our Churches support missionaries in the forests of Brazil, in the jungles of Africa, and on the plains of India in their efforts to combat ignorance, disease and Communism. Where do you think the money, collected by well-groomed ushers padding softly over the carpets in Church every Sunday, is sent? If other people want to stick to their own unprofitable religion, let them. Our religion makes us rich.

A Peruvian lady arrived recently in Canada and was taken to see the slums of Toronto where whole families live in filth and squalor jammed into single rooms. Her reaction, however, was not one of horror, but of surprise at the opulence of Canadian slums. "Why, they all have roofs," she exclaimed.

Peru is a Christian country? Oh well, the system is bound to fall down somewhere. Maybe the Peruvians don't go to Church often enough.

So when you sit down to your Christmas dinner, give thanks for a sympathetic God, who was generous enough to send His Son down to earth, and provide us with an excuse for all our Christmas festivities: give thanks for all our comforts, spiritual and material: think of the shops overflowing with all the necessities of life: think of the grain bins on the prairies bursting with the harvests of years: and thank God we are not as other men are.