

"NO COMMENT,"

absolutely no comment!"

on the witch hunt.

Last week's article on education has proven one thing: the Dalhousie Department of Education is certainly no laughing matter. In fact, it is something to be feared.

The newspaper was released Thursday night. At 9:15 Friday morning, it was delivered to the Education Department. By 10:30 the great witch-hunt had begun.

One would think that in a modern Canadian university a student would be free to criticize the course structure which is determining his studies. You may rest assured that he is not.

Certain professors of the Education Department reacted to last week's article in the most emotional and degrading ways imaginable. If there were factual errors in the article, the Department communicated none of these to the GAZETTE. Instead, certain professors in the Department began an actual campaign to determine the identity of the authors of the article.

One professor went to the trouble of pointing out to his class that if letters critical of the article did not appear in the GAZETTE, he could arrange for the failure rate to rise at the end of the year. Such a statement on the part of a professor is the most horrible type of blackmail which it is possible to imagine in a university context.

By Monday morning the situation had reached unbelievable propor-

tions as a professor announced that Prof. Mowat would soon be wiping the smirks off certain student faces, that the three culprits had been discovered, and that they would be "punished".

The author of the statements, and the accomplices who obviously supported him, have lost their integrity as men, much less as professors.

How can you fail to feel a certain surprise in belonging to a university which, despite its many merits, supports a department where not even the fronts of democratic processes are allowed, and where not even the first sort of academic freedom is enjoyed by students?

This is no exaggeration. The department's latest move consists of establishing a system whereby students can bring "honest criticisms" to the faculty by sending them anonymously to the executive of the Education society . . . It is important to understand that this was done in lieu of stating openly and with professional honour that students could bear their grievances and complaints directly to all faculty members without fear of reprisal. But of course, such a promise could not be taken seriously in light of the recent record of the department unless public apology were made to the victims, whoever they may be, of the department's manhunt.

On the other hand, a lesson should

be taken from this week's, and no doubt the whole year's, events in the Education Department. It should be clear that it is of incredible importance to have students sit on all faculty committees. Students have a right to help determine their curriculum, for they are the ones who are directly concerned with it. Student representatives have a right to be present when students are being discussed, and decisions concerning them are being made. Students have a duty to inform their professors of their complaints, in an honest and legitimate way, and with a guarantee that they will not be penalized for making statements which it is their right to make.

It would be extremely unfair to leave the reader with the impression that the Education department is "all bad". Some of the professors are as good and as open-minded as one could ever hope they would be. But some are certainly not.

After last week's article was printed, an attempt was made to contact many of the professors for interviews. While Dr. Engels refused to be interviewed, he was polite enough to explain his reasons.

The same can not be said of Prof. Mowat, who repeatedly and rudely refused even the most explanatory comments, and thereby helped the Gazette to develop an insight into why the Education Department is so open and so free.



A.S. MOWAT, M.A., B. Ed., Head of Education

"Take a strong stand"

Dear Sir:

I was disappointed to see that personalities became an issue in last week's unsigned article by education students.

Engels is a fool admittedly. But his competence or lack of it is peripheral to the larger problem. Map coloring techniques do little to increase our awareness (except of Eagle's colored pencils) Again, however, this is a trivial matter.

No one is allowed to criticize course content or professional approach. This is an important point. Mowat feigns freedom of discussion. What everyone knows, although no one will state it, is that there will be repercussions if criticism is levelled against any aspect of the programme. This charge would be difficult to prove. Everyone is intimidated however by the prospect of subtle discriminatory attacks. Even now I suspect that there may be a witch hunt to discover who wrote the last article in the paper. Even if this is not the case (and there are a great

number of us who feel that it is) the fact that such a possibility exists (even if it is in our minds) suggests that a very dangerous and unhealthy atmosphere exists in the department. No student should feel forced to pander to the professor's pet theories. I personally do. Discussion is allowed only within the professor's framework. To suggest an alternative is to risk a low mark. Now I have a mid 70 average. I am a coward. I will not stand up publicly against the department. I want my degree. But the department reeks of stagnation. Few new ideas are being presented. We are still being thrown tasty tidbits about Lunenburg and Edinburgh in the early 1900's. This is of necessity, since Mowat has been wallowing in the department for 29 years making the issues and progression more murky as time passes. To say that he is due to retire in a couple of years is not sufficient justification to allow the intolerable situation to continue.

I hope the Gazette will take a strong stand against the department.

"Hook, line, and sinker"

TO THE EDITOR:

Many people are swayed by everything they read and hear, and are completely unable to distinguish between propaganda and objective facts or between hostile outbursts and constructive criticism. Due to the recognition on our part, as Education students, of this extremely prevalent fact, we wish to clarify for your readers (and evidently for your own benefit, too) the actual situation that exists in the Dalhousie Education Department.

First, we recognize that as university students you must have regarded the Education publication in last week's GAZETTE as an insult to your intelligence. It is very obviously - to a critical reader - an exaggerated, emotionally-colored letter which reflects the superficiality of the thinking of the authors. Secondly, taking this for granted - that you are willing to examine people's opinions and viewpoints in an objective and critical way - we would present to you another side of the same story. We are very quick to recognize many serious shortcomings in our department, and would be the first to agree that some of the criticisms published were valid. Total condemnation of the department is not warranted, however.

We know, too, that there are not enough seminars to allow "formal" hashings over of our ideas and problems. Fortunately, perhaps, many of us have benefitted greatly from informal discussions among ourselves. We do not, in fact, have any say in the curriculum presented to us by the Education Department. Yes, all of us would appreciate a few more progressive, broad-minded and constructive ideas behind the courses and assignments offered by certain of the professors. Certainly, some of them could be much more sympathetic towards our suggestions and problems.

Perhaps it is expecting too much to assume that mere university graduates enrolled in the university's Education Department can recognize the motives of our professors without being "spoon fed." The statement presented last week that there is no criticism allowed for the existing school system in the province is exaggerated! No, we do not have a course called "NOVA SCOTIAN EDUCATION TODAY", but we ARE exposed to the principles and theories and practices which altogether make up the "system". The major problem that seems to confront these unsatisfied people is that they regard education as being a set inflexible and definitive system of methods and philosophies. In view of what it really is - a virtual web of complicated, intricate reactions of individual personality differences in many varied social, economic, geographical and mental situations - it just cannot be defined or pin-pointed to the degree that these frustrated people require to fulfill their needs and desires. They miss the whole point of flexibility - the absolute necessity for adaptability of process, methods and curricula in education systems.

We ARE allowed to criticize constructively and with reasonable logic what we are confronting in our practice teaching which exposes us to various school philosophies found in Nova Scotia. Some professors actually encourage our criticisms and observations; others could give us a lot more comments and could give more encouragement in our disagreements and problems instead of remaining so detached and "closed" on the matter.

Therefore, the value of chart-making, poster-painting, and even map-coloring can be appreciated. The "poster-painting" - as it was so-called - in Professor Marriot's course was extremely bene-

ficial! The students in the class agree. They were given an opportunity to look up material, ideas and techniques; they carried out their projects to their own personal satisfaction.

We are learning practical, concrete, and valuable methods which we can record in our scribbles or in our heads to use - IF WE SO DESIRE - in some future teaching experience. How we profit from these assignments is up to us. Variety and flexibility in classroom teaching has been proved most desirable and effective. These motives and ideas behind our courses in methods have been emphasized by our professors in ways that should have been obvious to anyone who attended classes and to anyone with any sense of reasoning ability.

The value of such activity in the "methods" courses brings out the question of the examinations at Christmas being "so easy" and reflective of those "forums of trivia with little value for actual teaching experience". The fact is not unknown in the Education Department that some persons who skipped a great many classes did well in examinations. Yes, the truth is, it is possible to cram for most of our exams and pass with a reasonably good average. However, all conscientious students are well aware that exams are no real measure of what a person has learned in a course, or really indicative of his potentials in any field of study. Education is no exception. The important thing is not the content, but the attitudes, the adaptability, the creativeness, and the social ease we develop that will help us as teachers. Thus, we can see and justify poster-making activity and similar things; and at the same time see the inadequacies of evaluative processes in an Education Department - (ours is there, too).

No, we do not have enough practice teaching; and the present set-up is very artificial. It is beneficial in that it does expose us to various classrooms and various school systems. The practice-teaching program should be changed in view of the inadequacies that may feel. Perhaps even a system of internship could be introduced into the teacher-training department of this university.

We also recognize that the elementary course, on the whole, seems better than the secondary course; and that students in the department with certain combinations of professors have a problem in recognizing the good points of the department. However, this could happen in any department faculty of any university. Some of the best academically qualified cannot teach us any better - and in fact are often much worse than others in the teacher-training program as well as in other faculties.

Yes we do recognize the shortcomings of our department, but at the same time, we respect its merits, and realize ITS problems. As it exists, it is not a TOTAL "waste of time"!

To the authors of this letter we would say: we feel for you in your dilemma. We are very sorry that you did not take a closer look before you left. Moreover, we feel that your actions do not represent your intellectual capacity accurately. You made the unpardonable mistake of allowing your emotional reactions to distort your clear, objective thinking powers. You allowed yourself to fall into that trap you are supposed to be able to avoid as a teacher. We suggest that, should you really want to improve teacher status, you do not complain about teacher-training in such a way that you only add to the false ideas people have about teachers now! There are venues within the Education Department itself; liaison between student teachers and professors

is not impossible if you work hard enough at it. You did not really try to bring about change - you argued and discussed in an infantile way, until you abandoned your worthwhile project.

To the editors of the GAZETTE we would say: we were sorry to witness such a show of poor taste and discrimination on your part in choosing to publish such untypical facts, instances lifted out of context and pictures labeled with captions which showed that you fell "hook, line, and sinker" for the letter you published last week. If you are interested in the reputation of the university and in the quality of your journalism, you shall have to be more critical in editing articles as serious as the Education one you published.

Sheila MacKenzie
Grace Kaizer
et al.

Interview with Mrs. Gamberg

Professor of Education

By RON NORMAN
a reporter for the Gazette

Ron Norman: Mrs. Gamberg, I can't remember ever hearing anything good about Education courses. Can YOU tell us anything good about them?
Mrs. Gamberg: There is a lot that is not good about departments of Education mainly because real problems are being ignored. As a result, potential teachers are given a hollow set of pieties which hide the real and often baser goals of the educational system. For example, we all know that in our society the struggle for money and the status it gives suffuses our educational system in the form of fierce and often inhuman competition, while educators pretend that the school is working for "individual self-development", "community betterment", "democratic living", etc.
But a department of Education can be bad only if the whole educational system is bad. Education departments did not INVENT the anti-intellectualism and apathy that pervade the whole system, including higher education. Certainly other university departments have no reason to feel smug. It is not that education departments are so much worse than others, but that they need to be far better. They are more directly responsible for training people who, in turn, can either work toward genuine educational reform or accept things as they are.

R.N. I have heard it said that any intelligent person who is master of a subject can teach that subject well. What do you think of that?
Mrs. G. That's true if mastery includes enthusiasm, real interest in teaching the subject; with young children that's even more important than formal knowledge per se. Just look at a bunch of kids starting school. They are enthusiastic, curious and eager to learn -- almost without exception. Unfortunately, it doesn't take very many years before the schools succeed in quenching a lot of this.

This pattern has almost nothing to do with the adequacy or inadequacy of the teacher's knowledge. The present system really has a negative attitude toward children. It sees them as a nuisance and an inconvenience, more as a burden than a hope. The child is taught to sit still because to move around is taken to mean that he wants to stir up trouble. He is taught to keep his mouth shut, because to talk means he's trying to cheat. He is taught a host of devices for manipulation to appease an authority that is often arbitrary and tyrannical.

It's detrimental to all children to have to adapt to this kind of regimen. It is particularly hard for lower-class kids who haven't been trained in middle-class values, and who therefore have more difficulty in meeting the demands of the schools. As we might expect, they don't succeed as well at being middle class and so are separated out for further discriminatory and debasing treatment. One of the great problems is that we have a one-class school system to conceal a multi-class society.

R.N. What do you say to a multi-class system?
Mrs. G. I would rather have a one-class society, which, of course, is the same as a society without classes.

R.N. While we are being general, do you think perhaps that children have different capacities and talents, and different contributions for society, so that they ought to be trained differently?
Mrs. G. There is little known as to how much people's capacities differ. We DO know that their OPPORTUNITIES differ greatly. The question will become relevant only when equal opportunities are provided for everyone.

R.N. What do you think of "streaming" in schools?
Mrs. G. I oppose the practice of re-enforcing the popular ideas of brightness and stupidity by the separation of kids in school supposedly along

these lines. If someone breaks one leg, it is not the job of the society to break the other, but rather to mend the first one. That is, even if we could accurately judge the intelligence of children -- which we can't at present -- the schools have no right to take those whose intelligence they judge to be less than others and then further penalize them instead of exerting extra efforts on their behalf. In socialist countries, those who master material first share the responsibility of helping the others.

R.N. Now, Mrs. Gamberg, supposing everything else in our society remains the same, how should Departments of Education change? Perhaps you find this question narrow to the point of pointlessness?
Mrs. G. Yes, the system IS in need of basic transformation. But I will try to answer you. Education departments teach theory and methods and supervise practice teaching. Take these three things in turn.

What is needed in Theory is more honesty. Students must be encouraged to look frankly at the failings of the present system. In Methods, students should be stimulated to incorporate new and progressive approaches. Techniques must be flexible and experimental.

As for practice teaching, extended periods of time should be allotted for it. There must be a continuous TWO-WAY communication between student teacher and supervisors, and there should be channels of communication with other student teachers and with administrators in the schools. It must be recognized that student teachers are in the classroom to learn rather than to be tested.

These are some things that could be done without radical changes in the present system.