

Why support workers?

The following is an edited excerpt from an editorial that appeared in the Gazette in October, 1976. At that time CUPE Local 1392 had just been informed by the Anti-Inflation Board that they had been "overpaid" and that they would have to return an average of \$500 each to the University. The issues that were discussed at that time are still relevant, especially in view of the present strike at Dalhousie. The numbers and dates have been changed to reflect the present situation.

Three dollars and eighty-two cents an hour, \$240 take home pay every two weeks, less than \$7,000 a year. It doesn't buy a lot of steak, a good car, or a home of your own. Because you've got no other choice it condemns you to hamburger, bus rides, and rents you can't afford.

\$3.82 an hour in 1978 means living hundreds of dollars below the poverty line for the men and women who do our cleaning, maintenance and grounds works at Dalhousie.

And that's the real starting point in the strike that is now happening on this campus.

A strike for Dalhousie maintenance workers . . . what possible difference could that make to students here?

Our interests, after all, are more intellectual—thinking great thoughts, writing great papers, getting great grades, or indifferent ones, and then degrees. Nothing in the world can be further removed from a wage dispute, one of the everyday things which looms large only in the lives of average working people, so different from us.

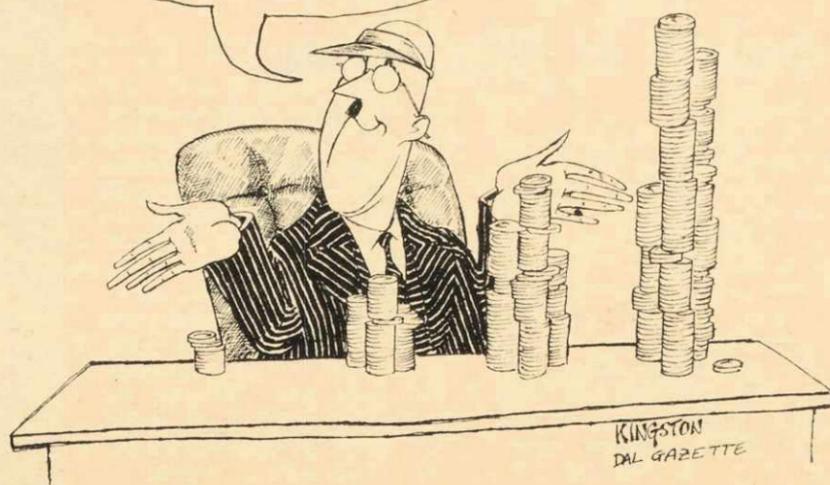
But no matter how little we realize it, our daily lives are inextricably linked with the working people of Dalhousie, and outside.

It doesn't take much insight to realize that it is workers who built our buildings and now clean them, sometimes cook and serve our food, record our grades, shelve our books, order chemicals for our labs, shovel snow in winter. Without their work, the university would grind to a halt, very quickly.

At the most crassly selfish level, then, we are linked to Dalhousie's workers because we need them. And the quality of our education is deteriorating **right now**, as the Administration's policies of real wage cuts and increased work loads reduces their own employee's effectiveness. No one could argue that the worker who has to hold two jobs to make ends meet can do his or her best at either. Nor that one person can do the job of two. Nor that a poorly paid person will do the same as a well-paid one. Nor that an experienced, trained Dal employee will stay here and work for thousands of dollars less than can be made someplace else in town.

When Administration policies build low morale, their work has to suffer. And so does our education.

AT LAST, EQUALITY FOR ALL



At one time the very nature of those who went to University allowed students the privilege of disdain for working people. Thirty years ago Dalhousie was the private preserve of those whose fathers were rich enough to buy them an education. Not any more. Now perhaps more than ever before, a significant percentage of the student body is made up of the sons and daughters of workers. Many of our parents' lives have been marked by the same struggle for living wages now being fought by Dal's maintenance workers.

If you'd attended Dalhousie thirty years ago, your future after graduation was more or less assured. For some, the military or professions, for most, government posts, business opportunities, teaching jobs. Not any more. A few of us will go on to professional schools, the best commerce students will still be snapped up by big firms. But for most graduates the doors of privilege have closed these past five years, and many have had to go out and work. We'll be hard pressed to live comfortably as our wages and salaries are strangled by inflation. We will then begin to share, though for most of us to a lesser degree, the plight of Dal's maintenance workers.

But for now, we're privileged. We live, comparatively, easy lives. For many of us this is an opportunity to fall prey to the most petty academic concerns, to lose sight of the world outside. For too few of us, it comes as a rare opportunity—and this is the real privilege—of having the time to take a long, hard look at the world we are a part of. We have the chance to study what goes on, and to start to judge it. How does it work? What's good and bad about it? What's decent and what's unfair? And what can be done about it?

This is the best way we can see the maintenance workers' fight for good wages, and our connection to it. The unadorned fact is that the wages and conditions Dalhousie imposes on its employees are shoddy and unjust. Dalhousie's treatment of employees is, in every sense of the word, but the legal one, a crime. We should be in no great quandry about what to do: Where we see injustice we ought to oppose it. We should stand with the maintenance workers to oppose the roll-back of their wages, support them however we can.

Letters

Howe hall neutral

To the Gazette:

In reference to your article last week entitled "Cleaners To Strike", there are a few facts that have to be clarified. Due to an unfortunate misunderstanding between the Gazette and myself, the article in question contained certain allusions of attitude attributed to Clement O. Norwood, Dean of Men. For the record, I would like to point out that the said attitude, i.e., the one concerning pressure exerted upon students by the administration to favor them in the strike, and the dire consequences which were to follow if this was not done, was not expressed to me by Dean Norwood but rather by another member of the administration.

Another point of contention is the use of the word "ass" in reference to the part of the

body which would be used for landing by residents, if Howe Hall were to be closed. At no time during my conversation with Dean Norwood did he ever use this term of reference for the possible vacating of the premises.

The above mistakes had to be immediately cleared up. However, my major concern is that the said article did not correctly convey the feeling of Residents' Council of Howe Hall. The stand that we are taking is **not** anti-administration or anti-union. The fact that we resent pressure being exerted upon us from either side is the issue in contention. The stand which we are taking is one of neutrality with the interests of Howe Hall residents being our basic concern. In our view, this involves keeping Howe Hall open as long as possible through "our own clean efforts" but is not to be interpreted as an attempt to thwart the strike.

We request both the Union and the University Administration to consider the potentially disastrous consequences of the strike on the residences. It will be us, the students in

residence, who will be forced to bear the full burden of the potential hardships that may be brought about in consequence of the strike. Thus, we are forced, while supporting neither side, to maintain livable conditions in our residences, for if they are closed, approximately 1,200 students will become homeless in a matter of hours.

I sincerely hope that this clarifies the position of our Council.

Andras Vamos-Goldman, President, Howe Hall Residents' Council.

They aren't brats...

To the Gazette: RE: "More Frats For Brats and Pals at Dal"

If you intend to publish truths, as I believe is the object of the Gazette, you should first obtain the same. To generalize the fraternities at Dalhousie, is to make one large fraternity, which would

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The Dalhousie Gazette, Canada's oldest college newspaper, is the weekly publication of the Dalhousie Student Union members, and is a founding member of Canadian University Press.

The views expressed in The Dalhousie Gazette are not necessarily those of the Dalhousie Student Union, the editor or the collective staff. We reserve the right to edit material for space or legal reasons, or if it is considered offensive to our readers.

The deadline for articles and letters-to-the-editor is noon on Monday. No unsigned material will be accepted but anonymity may be granted on request. Letters should not exceed 500 words and must be typed on a 64-character line and double spaced.

Advertising must be submitted by noon on the Friday preceding publication. National Advertising is handled through Youthstream, 307 Davenport Road, Toronto, Ontario M5R 1K5 (416) 925-6359.

Our office is located on the third floor of the Dalhousie Student Union Building. Our mailing address is the Dalhousie Gazette, Dalhousie University, Halifax, N.S. B3H 4J2. You can reach us by telephone at (902) 424-2507.

The subscription price is \$9 per year (25 issues), and our International Standard Serial Number is CN ISSN 0011-5819.

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