

Teaching the teachers Funding sought for literacy education course

by Lyssa McKee

A certificate programme in adult literacy education that was offered at Henson college this fall will not be offered again unless new funding can be found. The successful programme was the first and only such course in Canada.

Dr. Ruth Gamberg, a professor in Dalhousie's School of Education, initiated the programme to fill what she saw as a void in education. She explains that the graduate courses in literacy available at Dalhousie are not accessible to the majority of the people already working in the literacy movement.

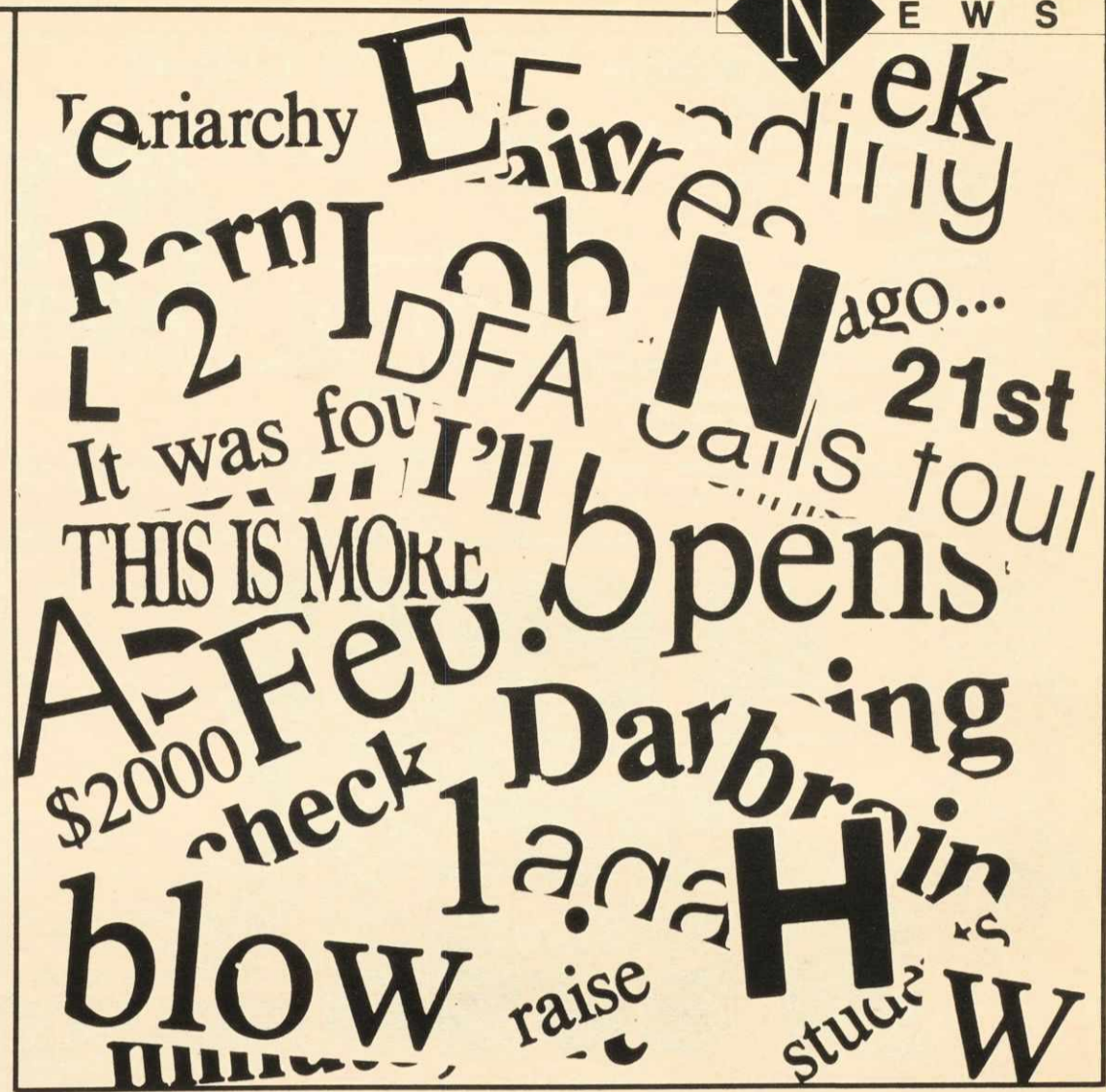
Most literacy tutors are not degree-holding teachers, but simply individuals interested in fighting illiteracy. Thus, they are not eligible for studies at the graduate level. Gamberg felt that a certificate program would allow the people who are already

working in the field to improve their skills.

The course was taught from September to December, and involved 42 hours of instruction. The 20 students, who included representatives from all twelve local literacy programmes, were taught about learner assessment techniques, and were introduced to a variety of activities, teaching aids, and resource materials to help learners. Gamberg describes the course as "a smashing success."

Gamberg originally hoped that the course could be offered again in January. However, the funds required to subsidize the programme are not available.

"The reason why the course must be subsidized is obvious," Gamberg says. "Most of the people working in literacy programmes are volunteers. They are already being good enough to give their time; it is unreasonable to expect them to pay \$400 for a



For an illiterate adult, the world is an endless confusion of meaningless symbols, signifying nothing.

course."

The funding for the first course was provided by grants from Henson College and the Nova Scotia Department of Advanced Education and Job Training. It is

hoped that additional funding may be forthcoming from the federal government, who have pledged to spend \$110 million on literacy over the next five years.

However, Gamberg points out that teacher education is only "one of many things that are needed" by the literacy movement. Materials, new programmes, and additional funding for existing programmes are also badly needed. In scope of what's needed, and considering that it's spread over five years, she says, "\$110 million is not a lot of money."

Gamberg says that the adult illiteracy rate in Nova Scotia is estimated to be 20-25%. She estimates that less than 2% of the peo-

ple who could benefit from literacy improvement programs are enrolled in such programmes in Metro. "And Halifax is ahead of most of the province," she says.

Governments, according to Gamberg, do not give literacy enough priority. "These are people without a voice and without any power in our society."

"There is something very peculiar," she says, "about the current system. It requires teachers to have a university degree in education to teach six-year-olds; but it requires no training whatsoever to teach adults the same things. If you missed out on learning to read when you were six, you just don't count in our society."

No rep — no \$

by Alison Auld

At the last Sunday's Council meeting, held on January 15, concerns were raised pertaining to the fact that the Arts Society has been without representation since early October when Arts Rep. Andreas Katsouris resigned to become Course Evaluation Coordinator.

Council members stated that they were worried that the various societies represented by the Arts Society are not receiving funds to which they are entitled — totalling almost \$6000.

The Arts Society acts as an umbrella group for the every Arts faculty on campus. The majority of the funds in question come from society tuition fees, which are collected by financial services and then given to the SDU treasurer. A representative of an "A" Society, such as the Arts Society, is responsible for distributing the allotted funds to the "B" Societies such as the Political Science society. The money may also go to different faculties contained within the general Arts or Sciences societies. However, if a "B" society is not represented by their "A" society on Council, they can't get their money.

Edythe McDermott, Grants committee chair says that the Arts Society "has not been functioning this year" and confirmed that this gap is causing problems for some students. McDermott says that "the Grants Council is not responsible for distributing these funds" as it "is more of a supplementary fund".

Shelley Galliah, the recently-


ratified Arts representative, explained at last Sunday's Council meeting that to rectify the situation, other representatives must be found for the Arts Society. Although McDermott says that the Arts Society has been "non-existent", she adds that the problem will soon be resolved as people become more aware of the issue.

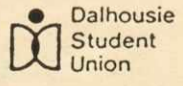
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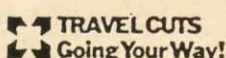
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