



Letters

Rebuttal to editorial

To the Gazette,

Perhaps it was more than one could expect that the editorial staff of the Dalhousie Gazette would have a thorough understanding of the Canadian economy. One would, however, definitely expect that an editorial expressing such a bias opinion of labour, as printed in last week's Gazette, would be substantiated by a few facts.

The editorial implied that labour and labour unions are to blame for the present inflationary trend and economic situation in Canada. The editorial suggested that labour demands have caused others in society to suffer unjustly. It is true that inflation does decrease the value of the dollar, and that those people on a fixed income do suffer a decline in purchasing power, it is not true, however, that wages cause inflation. To infer causation an increase in wages would have to precede a rise in the cost of living. Investigation shows however, that inflationary trends always precede wage trends: "So to say that wages cause inflation is akin to saying that the skier caused the boat to go faster."

One of the major reasons for inflation is the increase in the money supply. An increase in the money chasing a fixed amount of goods and services results in an increase in the price of the goods and services. This increase in the money supply can be generated from two sources, the public and the private sector. Prime Minister Trudeau has promised that the federal government will not be increasing expenditures but there was no mention of controls on the private sector. The increase of credit by the banks and finance company is one of the most significant causes of inflation, yet the Gazette editorial did not touch on this area.

Profits are another cause of inflation that the editorial overlooked in its bias attack on the labour movement. What provisions have been made to restrain increases in profits? An inflationary board has been organized to investigate violations which are reported by consumers. The board at present is receiving approximately 500 complaints a day. It is obvious that most complaints will never be investigated and large corporations will be able to use the wage controls to increase profits.

When Great Britain introduced wage and price controls, its rate of inflation was about the same as that of Canada at this time. Britain now has a rate of inflation of 27% and the purchasing power of the British worker has decreased. Wage and price controls can hardly be considered beneficial to the working people.

It is certainly not the trade unions which have perpetuated the injustices suffered by unorganized workers, on the contrary, it has been the efforts of union members that have set the standard for non-union workers. This is evident by the more favourable working conditions enjoyed by workers in regions where unions are strong as opposed to the poor conditions which prevail in areas where the union movement is weak.

In addition, the editorial staff of the Gazette would do well to examine the composition of the present day student population at university. At one time university education was reserved for the economically privileged. The "educated elite" was derived from the "economic elite." This is no longer the case, most students at university come from families of a working class background. To a large extent it is the gains that the labour movement have won for all workers that have given many students the opportunity to pursue a university education.

It is the trade unions that provide

opposition to the economic power of the large corporations. Without the labour movement, monopolies and oligopolies would exploit the Canadian worker, without recourse for the worker. As large corporations continue to concentrate their power, it would be fool-hardy, for workers to have their organizations and position weakened.

The Gazette would do a great deal better if it encouraged students to affiliate themselves with the labour movement in its efforts for a more egalitarian society, instead of fostering an elitist attitude towards the working classes.

Chuck Willis
Arts III

Second rebuttal

To the Gazette:

It's always encouraging to see what a good healthy recession can do for student attitudes as evidenced by the Gazette's editorial of last week. The Gazette joins the ranks of most other newspapers in the country -- although with a lot less subtlety -- in rubbing their editorial hands in glee at Trudeau's crackdown on wage and salary earners.

Despite the logical coherence and reasoned argument of the Gazette's editorial on wage controls, I confess to having a few nagging doubts.

If a person's education is supposed to determine how much they make, then why do so few millionaires have four Ph.D.'s? Must all janitors have Grade Four schooling?

If labour has such a stranglehold on the economy, why do they all have to go on strike to get what they want? Wouldn't it be easier just to whip management into line without having to lose any pay during a strike? Those guys from the Liquor Commission out beating the bricks only a week ago sure looked like awfully powerful people, carrying their picket signs back and forth on the street.

And maybe the definition of "fat cat" has changed lately? The average industrial wage -- for workers in large establishments in Nova Scotia -- is about \$165 a week. "Fat cats"? Look around, noticed how much a Dal janitor or secretary makes? Are they parking Cadillacs, Mercedes, Triumphs on the streets around Dal? "Fat cats"?

How fortunate that I read the Gazette. Otherwise I would have failed to see the working and Nova Scotia "eating, drinking and being merry" while the rest of society -- doctors, lawyers, university professors, stockbrokers, corporate investors included -- were being driven relentlessly into the poor-house.

Rollie Thompson *Cont'd on page 6*

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