

Words and music by A. Randall

The State of the Union - '69

The purpose of this meeting is to present you with a review of the year just concluded and to give you our assessment of the current status as we leave office.

When I joined student government three years ago as Treasurer, we were faced with inadequate and inappropriate structure and facilities. We have realized the dreams of others. A three year program is now complete. The time has come to articulate and set forth the goals and philosophy of student government in clearer, redefined form. The real challenges lie in the area of fuller, more effective participation of university students in the affairs of their community. The challenge lies in the development of a broader sense of student, and the working towards the attainment of these goals.

A great number of Dalhousie students have conservative characteristics in their attitudes towards student politics, student government and the role of the university student in the university community. Many of these attitudes are directly counter to the basic ideals and role of a university. Conservative university students attitude toward politics is negative in nature and in contradiction to the historical role of the university in the fostering of an understanding of political philosophy and the evolution of government. The negative attitudes of some of our students towards politics is in contradiction to the intellectual community.

To a great number of our students, the radical student movement, referred to as the "new left" is equated to sin. Those who propound new ideas are often subjected to irrelevant, personal attacks, largely because those making the attacks have a basic fear of new ideas, basically anti-intellectual in nature. There are those who have criticized myself and my predecessors for permitting the minority the opportunity of a fair and reasonable chance to articulate their views. To be perfectly honest, conservative elements have dominated the three Councils I have sat on. If this mathematical majority was permitted to stand, untempered, the result would be a paralysis that would have continued the status quo. A status quo that would have relegated the Student Union Building to an unrealized dream: relegated the university student to the role of a passive high school student.

In 1964, the Dominion Bureau of Statistics indicated that two out of four university students came from families from the top 25% of the family incomes in Canada; that only 5% of the university population was derived from families in the lower 25% incomes of Canada. While improvements have been made, the conclusion can be made that, given uniform academic standards, there is a privileged minority that enjoys attendance at university by virtue of family economics. Let me be quite clear, this is not a tirade against economic prosperity, it is an honest view of the para-academic circumstances of student environment. It would be tragic if we permitted this environment to allow a privileged minority to harness university education in the aid of maintenance of the status quo.

In my experience, too many university students react in accordance to environment and background. Too many student leaders are often too comfortable. Thus the university, the institution of change, permits the status quo to remain unchallenged. This is a situation historically contrary to the role of a university.

In practical terms, it would be unacceptable to allow the parliamentary majority to prevail without any real differences in opinion, philosophy or policy. There is no question as to where the majority lies. What I and my predecessors have attempted to do in permitting full and open debate is to permit the democratic process to function unhampered. The majority, by definition, will prevail. The major difference between mindless totalitarianism and democracy is the basic right to dissent. This right is the right of non-conformity. Democracy is not the imposition of the tyranny of the majority. It is the freedom of individuality, of dissent and of conflict. The record clearly shows that Young, Ashworth and I have not sided with the "new left" per se.

We have fought for their right to disagree with our views. There is no question that this has not been as neat, as convenient or as pleasant as might have been the case if quick, immediate votes were called. It has been more time consuming; frustrating and on occasion wasteful than might have been the case. It has been the price of democracy. To those who follow, I say this: the success, albeit limited, of student government at Dalhousie, as compared to other institutions, is that there has been the freedom to express widely divergent points of view, in the knowledge that all will have the opportunity to be heard.

I have noted, with some concern, a growing backlash to student activism, and to the events on other campuses. My own record has been three years of active moderation, and that there is no question that I have fought against violence, demagoguery and emotionalism as a substitute for rational, effective political participation. The record shows this. At the same time, the characteristics of a backlash shows a marked similarity to the characteristics of the extremism that precipitated it - namely intolerance, insensitivity and intellectual arrogance. Do not destroy the positive aspects of activism because of the negative effects. Work to strengthen that which is right and just, and stand firmly against what is harmful to our cause. Have the courage of conviction.



"Like I said - history will be kind to me."

Reviewing the year just concluded, there are two areas where we have shown great improvement: the area of the role of the student in university, and the development of the Student Union as a strong, vital force in the university community.

In the area of student participation, the first year of students on Senate has been worthwhile and positive. The election of the two incumbent senators was gratifying. These two individuals have been responsible and effective in the articulation of our views and I commend them for it.

During the past year we have participated in a number of university and faculty committees affecting the quality of student life - academic and non-academic alike. I believe that here again our contribution has been positive and progressive. I do, however, see a serious problem, the shortage of articulate, effective and dedicated students to represent us, because of the sacrifice of time and effort required. That is, the university community is now looking for student participation at a very high rate and that a concentrated effort is now required to meet this new and more exciting challenge. For you, the incoming student leadership, this constitutes a tremendous responsibility: to carry forward student representation at all levels. Speaking in all frankness, the long run success of our efforts lies, to a great extent, in your hands. The road is open!

I am pleased to report to you that negotiations with respect to student representation on the Board of Governors is proceeding at a very rapid rate, and that I expect the appointment of three student representatives before the end of the term. Indeed, Dr. Hicks has requested nominations for appointments. In response, I have nominated the president-elect and the General Manager of the Student Union, the former for a one year term; the latter for a three year term. Both these nominations are the result of the stated public policies of the Student Union over the past three years. I am confident that these names will be before the Governor-in-Council in the very near future.

There are considerable problems to be faced immediately. The shortage of housing throughout Canada is well known to students here at Dalhousie. We estimate that our enrollment projections indicate over 1,000 shortages in accommodation by September of 1970. We have made some progress in this area, but I would describe it as stop-gap in nature. In response to my letter to Dr. Hicks, as previously outlined to Council, the University has created the position of a full-time Accommodations Officer. This position will result in a full time housing office rather than the two month student housing service run by the Student Union in August and September. It will devote attention to the filling of accommodation needs of students and faculty alike. It is possible that the administration might require financial support from the Union, particularly to remunerate part-time student inspection staff. I am recommending that the Union make funds equivalent to our own housing appropriation available to the University.

Basically, the accommodations office will only find space from the existing housing supply: given the characteristics of supply available and the existing costs structure. Thus, the long-run solution lies in the creation of new housing supply - at a cost and design suitable to student demand. I call on the administration to construct new housing for the university community.

The real problem for Dalhousie is finding the 10% of the funds necessary to qualify for the 90% of cost of loans from the Federal Government sponsored C.M.H.C. I believe that the Union should undertake a serious immediate study of the feasibility of direct Union participation in housing developments, given Government and University assistance. I recommend that the Council give a very high priority to this

item immediately.

In the area of student finances, the threat of increased student costs of education, direct and indirect. We have urged the administration to undertake a widespread review of the spending policies of the university to assure that maximum resource value is attained from the dollars available. We endorse, in principle, both Dr. Hicks efforts and the proposals from Dean James and the student service committee. We urge immediate action by the entire university community.

On the subject of tuition, we face bleak prospects. We already have the highest costs schedules in the country; and the least economic resources, as a region, to meet the costs. I call on Education Minister Gerald Doucet to stop playing politics and engaging in a display of semantics and give us an indication of the level of government support for the coming year 1969-70. If the Minister is serious when he says the government has no knowledge of the level of support to be recommended to the House of Assembly at this late date I say to him directly: It is the most serious abrogation of cabinet responsibility in our parliamentary government yet witnessed in Nova Scotia, and it just isn't good enough!

I call on faculty, administration, alumni and students to join in a responsible presentation for the case of higher education, and the level of financial support.

Last year, as I took office, I warned that the union faced serious internal problems of time, space and resources. The problem of communication was raised. The opening of the Student Union Building has solved our space constraints. There are those who criticized this student government for being a "bureaucratic, technocratic, dictatorial, elite." And it is true that structure occupied a good part of our attention. The main reason for this was that the Student Union exists by, for, and from the student body, not for a paid, permanent technocracy. To place meaningful power in the hands of amateurs, irrespective of intention. Contrary to popular belief, we do not pursue this policy because it is efficient: but because it is democratic. We have all observed what happens when professionals control policy. A civil service mentality prevails, where programs are generated by the non-participants. We have one of the best permanent staffs in the country; primarily because they understand the difference between politics and administration.

We recommend that the Political Affairs Secretary's office be repealed. The President would assume direct responsibility for this area. Further it is our recommendation that the post of Academic Affairs Secretary be created to co-ordinate the growing participation in academic life of the university. We recommend that this post be given to a Council member if possible.

On the whole, I believe that the outgoing Council and administration can view with some satisfaction the year just completed. It is true, we all had our disappointments, but I believe, speaking on behalf of the executive that satisfaction outweighed any disillusionment. To those following, don't be too quick to criticize us on our short-comings. It is always easier to make election promises than to keep them.

Speaking for myself, I express my appreciation for the support that you have given myself, Pam and Bill. Naturally I am more partial to those politically partisan to our cause.

I say this to the President-elect in all sincerity; I hope he enjoys the dedication and support and loyalty that is has been my own privilege to have known. I believe the Council should give the incoming officers the maximum possible support, because they will need it.