

### “What’s been did, what’s been hid”

# Faculty power and student discontent in Soc

by Glenn Wanamaker

“I was disappointed upon arriving at Dalhousie last summer to find that a small, highly exclusive clique of poor to failing Sociology students had ripped off the slogans of the radical left and were masquerading as oppressed proletariats in order to make faculty members feel too guilty to flunk them out.”  
Prof. Jerome Barkow

## Chronology

Early this term, a new course union was formed in the Sociology department following numerous attempts in previous years. It organized and held open meeting for all Soc students.

At about the same time students in Professor Nick Poushinsky's two courses — Statistics 301 and Honours seminar 450A — began voicing complaints.

1. In 301, the first part of the course dealt with computer programming. However, Poushinsky attended only two classes in the six-week section, leaving the actual teaching to a programmer from the Computer Centre.

2. He failed to provide the proper data required for a term paper, resulting in two requests for extensions, the second being obtained after a group letter.

3. They say he was belligerent and did not properly answer questions when students needed aid.

4. He was also not readily available after class time to talk with students and he gave oral commitments that he did not keep.

As a result, a large proportion of the students dropped the course.

The dissatisfaction with 450A was general.

1. The content was badly organized.  
2. Again students found the professor belligerent. On one occasion, Poushinsky held a surprise test because he was dissatisfied with student response in previous classes. The next class was boycotted.

3. Despite the fact that Soc. 450A is compulsory for a graduate student, the importance of this course was lost due to the atmosphere which permeated the class.

“It is very, very disturbing that a few people are apparently going out of their way to lay the seeds of conflict in the department and are trying to force us into a police state.”

Chairman Dr. D. Clairmont

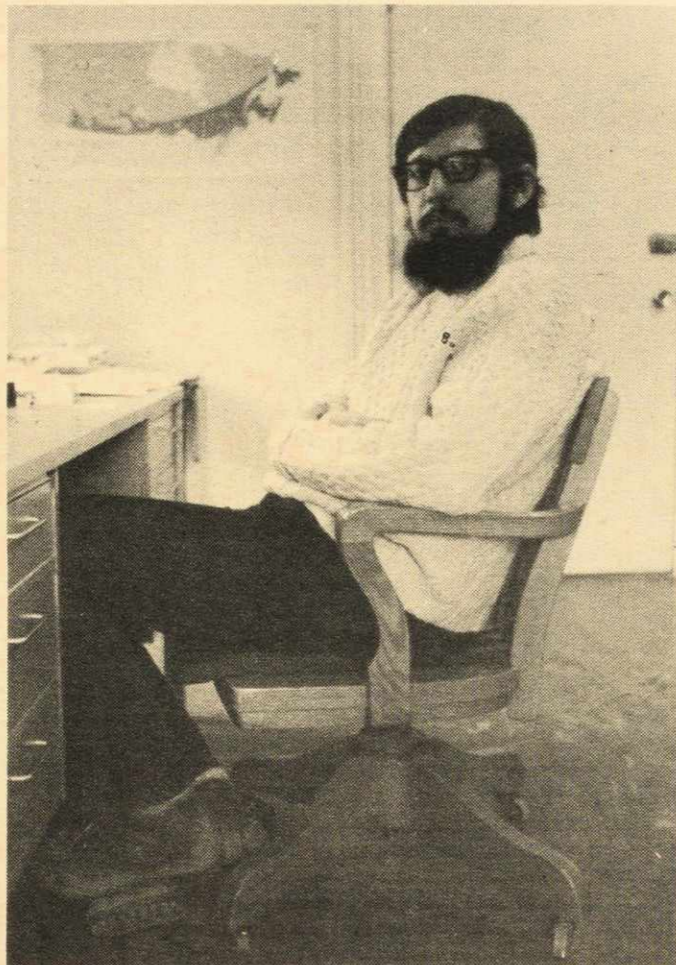
“I did not intend to remain personally involved until the tyrants came after me.”  
Dr. D. Clairmont

The general charges were teaching incompetence, intimidation of students and neglect of teaching responsibilities. Poushinsky is supposed to have missed 37% of classes in one course and 64% in the other.

One of the reasons for this is that he is a Class A lobster fisherman which not only takes a lot of time but deprives another fisherman of a job. (see accompanying story)  
After the charges were made known, the department and administration began their “test case”. The course union's Grievance Committee asked that a committee comprising of two students, two faculty and an impartial observer be set up.

Soc Department Chairman Don Clairmont vetoed the idea of having Ombudsman Ian Chambers as the observer and in its place activated the same committee minus Chambers. This committee, the Under-graduate advisory Committee or Pro Tem Committee consisted of professors D. Q. Brodie and Bill Stephens and students Simon Rasmussen and Janet Webster. They refused to sit on it because of its composition.

At the same time, Ian Chambers and Dean of Arts and Science Guy MacLean formed a second committee. They made their own investigation and made recommendations to the Pro Tem committee. However students felt that their recommendations (or more particularly, MacLean's recommendations) would carry all the weight.



carl mackay/ dal photo

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## Do you ever have the feeling that nobody likes what you do?

“If they (the Pro Tem committee) agree with me,” said MacLean, “it will be hunky-dory.” Asked what he would do if they did not agree, he said he did not know.

Now that the report has been completed, it would seem that students fears have been borne out. The only recommendations that deal with Poushinsky are these:

1. Professor Poushinsky make himself widely and immediately available to those students in Soc 301 for consultation and assistance.

2. Professor Poushinsky ensured that all student papers and examinations be returned to students through himself or through the secretary of the Department.

3. Any student in Soc 301 who feels he has been or will be unfairly graded may have his examination re-marked or marked by another professor competent in Statistics. The other professor may come from any department of the university so long as he is approved by the executive committee of the Department.

The report makes no recommendations for the 450A seminar — only general ones dealing with the purpose of the graduate programme. Nor does the report deal with Poushinsky's lobstering activities.

“We were told on the one hand that this was our seminar course and on the other hand, that we were not capable of directing the course. The following week, everyone except the two students presenting the seminar, boycotted the class, to discuss the situation.”

— student

It does, however, deal with its own fate. The members recommended that the report be withheld from the student body until the “problem” is resolved. Clairmont also refused to release a copy of the report to the GAZETTE.

At this time it is not known whether even these recommendations will be acted upon. The next step in the confusing process is supposed to be acceptance (or rejection) by the faculty executive committee. This committee has no students — the only Soc committee that doesn't — and two of its members are also the very same pair that wrote the report, Brodie and Stephens.

The next move, even at this late stage, is up to the students.

## Some quotable quotes

“I found Professor Poushinsky's attitude in class arrogant and abrupt. He did not encourage the students to ask for help when they did not understand the subject matter.”

— student

“At the next class, the situation was discussed between students and Professor Poushinsky, but the communication gap between the two parties seemed to widen. There seemed to be an uneasy air of tension in the course for the rest of the term.”

— student

“He seemed to take his responsibility lightly and assumed that any conflict or problem in the course was the fault of the students. He manifested a blatantly patronizing behaviour towards the class.”

— student

“...the members of the clique are interested in power for themselves not participation for the students.”

Prof. Jerome Barkow

“If students want power they must seek it at its source; from the Board of Governors.”

Prof. Jerome Barkow

“I pay no attention to anonymous documents floating around.”

Dean Guy MacLean

“And when we asked questions, we were on occasion told that our questions were stupid or that it was in some article if we would care to read it. He did not seem willing or able to help us, and as a result I often felt intimidated.”

— student

“He was absent on several occasions. Once I believe he was lobster fishing on our time and had another professor substitute for him. This proved to

be a refreshing escape from Professor Poushinsky's bumbling mannerism in class.”

— student

“He was teaching algebraic equations incorrectly. As well, statistical equations were incorrect. He bullied the class with his teacher authority by constantly calling on hands and asking who was finished and who was not finished the little problems he gave us.”

— student

“In the six weeks spent learning how to use the computer, I saw Prof. Poushinsky in the class once.”

— student

“The prime interest of the Dean's office and my own, at the present time, is the welfare of the students in the courses under consideration and the time is running short to remedy the situation. The process proposed above offers the chance of a fast and effective solution because the Dean is in the position to order directly that certain measures be taken.”

Ian Chambers, Ombudsman

“Students seem to want a confrontation which they won't get through me.”

Dean MacLean

“At times he seemed almost belligerent in trying to get students to drop the course.”

— student

“Such actions on his part seemed to immediately separate the students from him. Also I personally feel students should not be encouraged to leave a course they wish to take.”

— student

## Poushinsky's life with lobsters

A good deal of Poushinsky's time has been spent fishing for lobsters out of his home community of Sambro. Students investigation has discovered that he:

- a. holds a Class A lobster fisherman's license which allows full-time lobstering,

- b. took out a loan from the Nova Scotia Fisheries Board to cover the cost of outfitting his boat,
- c. has engaged in lobstering the whole of the lobstering season that was workable (Nov. 22 to late December),
- d. sold his catch to Mel's Market on Inglis Street,
- e. can claim any losses from lobstering against his own and his wife's income.

A student memo also says the following:  
“The instructor has specified this activity to his students and colleagues by claiming to be conducting participant observation study of lobster fishermen. The inherent contradictions in this statement arise from his violation of several traditionally held ethical principles of participant observation research, i.e., that:

- a) the participant observer participates in the work and not the income,
- b) the participant participates in the activity with other fishermen. He does not buy a boat and obtain a loan to outfit his boat,
- c) the participant observer does not take a job from another community member. A lobster license must now be brought from another fisherman because no new licenses are being issued,
- d) the outside activity in which the observer is engaged somehow supplements his university work. It has instead caused him to be negligent in his role as an instructor and in his role as undergraduate advisor.”

Late last December an Eastern Passage couple were extremely critical of the new federal government regulations regarding the issuing of new lobster licenses. Now, a prospective lobster fisherman has to buy a license from a retiring fisherman. It costs close to \$1000 to obtain such a license, thus only a person earning about \$10,000 a year could afford to buy one.

In a Mail-Star article December 7, Edmund Henneberry said there were several fishermen earning such salaries at full-time jobs.

“In my opinion,” said Henneberry, “men who are making a good living wage are stealing money from fishermen's wallets — it's the same as robbery.”

He also pointed out that most of these fishermen were making twice the salary of a regular fisherman.

Sociology students feel that Poushinsky falls directly into this category.

## Students shafted faculty wins again

The shaft in the Sociology Department is almost complete. Don Clairmont and Guy MacLean had to stretch things a bit but exams are nearly here and soon students will be leaving the campus. And soon the “trouble” will “blow over”.

But it should not be.  
Guy MacLean did what was expected of him — he supported the faculty and Don Clairmont in opposition to the course union. If he had recommended that Poushinsky give up his fishing license and drastically revamp his classes, it would have been a victory for the course union.

Don Clairmont did what he wanted — he had “his” committee do what he wanted. It pointed out professionalization as the objective of Poushinsky's courses. It also underlined the historical problems with Statistics courses — which is exactly what Clairmont told the GAZETTE not two weeks before the report was com-

pleted.  
And the Pro Tem Committee did exactly what they were set up to do — whitewash the whole issue of teaching negligence and incompetence. Brodie and Stephens (as members of the Pro Tem Committee) have submitted their report to Brodie and Stephens (as members of the faculty executive committee) et al.

But what none of these people did was silence the top dog, University President Henry Hicks. Last week, Hicks stated that from what he knew of the situation, it was “disgusting”. He also said that if these charges were true, Poushinsky should be “bloody well fired”. Maybe this means that there will be a real investigation into the allegations. There should be.

The Pro Tem report did nothing to resolve the dispute — it was just a neat little whitewash job.