

Can Dal meet its obligations to society?

The president's Statement on the Mission of Dalhousie University (see Dal News January 18) is vague and would be hard to translate into specific policies and programs. The authors can be commended for a nice try at a difficult task but the Statement should go further.

But what will Dal be in the twenty-first century: A fine institution of higher learning or a glorified vocational school, a pompous Harvard of the North, or a community-oriented university?

Can a university be centre of innovation and social criticism when its funding (read life-blood) comes from the government and the business community, groups who would want a steady stream of mass-produced workers who complacently accept their leaders' visions, policies and production

goals?

Dalhousie should not only "define the vision of society" but help create that vision of society which is just, well-balanced, cosmopolitan and above all educated. Dalhousie and other universities should emphasize diversity of thought, something society really needs.

During the recent free trade debate many people said that they didn't really understand free trade, much less the actual agreement. The government presented the agreement the same way Chrysler would advertise a new car. In order to fully understand free trade, people would have to know about economics but also history, arts and sciences. These subjects are not very vocational but are necessary for a well-educated society.

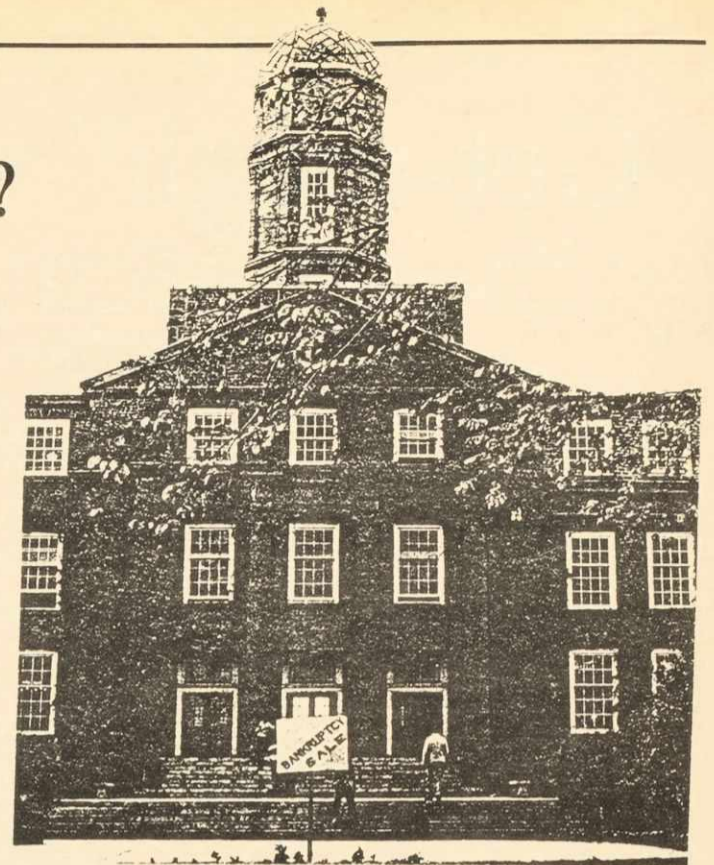
If the universities are short of

funds then why don't they go on strike like our professors just did? Some 20,000-odd university students not spending their money in Nova Scotia would put a dent in the economy, not to mention the effect on the youth unemployment rate when all those young people have nothing better to do. Other provinces should also help fund their students who come here.

Dalhousie should have a one-year core curriculum, a sort of Dalhousie foundation year. Engineers and accountants should know a fair bit about the world before we let them loose.

The Statement says, "Dalhousie's undergraduate enrolment will not increase substantially." (Yay!) Who wants classes in the Dalplex fieldhouse?

—Scott Randall



Letters

Boycott blueberries

Dear Editors:

It is time that a public discussion takes place in our province concerning the health and environmental hazard associated with commercial lowbush blueberry production. Within Nova Scotia it is estimated that there are about 26,000 acres under cultivation and over 1000 growers. Cumberland County produces about 75% of the present harvest, although Central, Western and Eastern Nova Scotia and Cape Breton, all have commercial operations. Many people live close to blueberry fields.

Blueberry spraying is considered an agricultural activity and is essentially unregulated. This means that for consideration of the impact of differing pesticides upon particular soil types, consideration of wind speeds or the width of stream buffer zones, whether workers who spray or work in recently sprayed fields should wear protective equipment etc., we are forced to rely on the unsupervised "good sense" of the sprayers. Yet people who use blueberry sprays often know nothing about the real dangers of the chemicals they are using, perhaps relying for their information on company pesticide labels, chemical promotional literature from the department of agriculture, etc.

Pesticide Residues: Because of the large number of insecticides, fungicides and herbicides recommended for use, pesticide residues on purchased berries must be a concern. Provincial government literature recommends the use of ten insecticides and fungicides, eg. Ambush, Captan, Cygon and Gunginex. All but two of these, are applied in the year the fruit is

picked. Such residues will also affect the pickers in the blueberry fields and wildlife which consume blueberries or blueberry plants. Government literature also recommends the use of seven herbicides, eg. Atrazine, 2,4-D, Dicamba and Velpar, against what are considered "weeds".

Groundwater Contamination: If you don't look for problems you are not going to find them, and there is very little monitoring of pesticides in groundwater in Nova Scotia. Despite this, the types of chemicals used in blueberry spraying are turning up in wells and groundwater. We would also like to point out that 2,4-D, itself a proven cancer-causing chemical, is routinely mixed with fuel or diesel oil and used against hardwoods. Thus the provincial department of agriculture advocates adding 70 litres of diesel or furnace oil in a tank mix of 450 litres. (Other components of the hardwood-killing mix are Dicamba, adjuvants "such as Triton XR, SuperSpred, or Agral-90" and water.) The sloping, gravelly character of many blueberry fields, increases the possibility of run-off and contaminated groundwater.

Burning: Blueberry growers routinely, on a two year basis, burn their fields. Burning is a method of pruning the plants. The other method of pruning is close mowing. The provincial department of agriculture, in its literature, favours burning. Yet all burning removes some organic matter from fields and the deeper the burn, the more is removed. Removing plant cover promotes soil erosion. As organic matter is depleted, nitrogen fertilizers are increasingly being used. Toxic contaminants from previously applied pesticides, are released into the air from burning, an obvious disservice to neighbours. The burning of blueberry fields also kills "non-target" insects, destroys cover for

small animals and reptiles and ground-nesting birds, etc.

What Can Be Done? We believe several things are on the immediate agenda: First, people living close to commercial blueberry fields should organize their communities to eliminate the use of pesticides on the fields. Basically, people should have the right to give an informed consent or informed rejection to blueberry spraying. We propose that no blueberry grower could spray any pesticide without written permission from all the people living within one kilometer of the field.

Second, we are poisoning the Earth, the basis of all life. In the long term, we need to move to an organic agriculture, without pesticides. While this may entail a lower production level, people's health, the environment, and wildlife will benefit. Third, we ask those who share the concerns expressed in this letter, to boycott pesticide-sprayed blueberries. Let store owners/restaurants know that you want organically grown berries.

This letter is endorsed by the following persons: Helga Hofmann, Don Rushton, Shirley Smith, Willis Lunn, Helga Stahl-Duff, Henry Holgate.

Harke chastised

To the Editors:

How ironic that Mr. Harke should criticize the Gazette for printing Cory Francis' "disgraceful drivel" and yet request that his own (no less disgraceful) response be published! Mr. Harke's letter brims with intellectual arrogance from its opening sentence to its needlessly condescending postscript. Is this the way a mature student presents an argument? By ridiculing the opponent and flaunting his own

degree?

While I do not necessarily subscribe to Cory Francis' argument in its entirety, I certainly disagree with Mr. Harke's pretentious refutation. True, university is more challenging than high school and many students who found high school difficult will not excel in post-secondary studies. But this does not mean that all students with low grade point averages are doomed to fail! There is some truth to Mr. Francis' suggestion that a grade point average does not reflect a student's potential. Many high school students are simply not interested in the courses they are required to take and consequently devote little effort to them — but at university, where they can study the subjects of their choice, they may still do well. And a 60% average is certainly not as ridiculous as Mr. Harke pretends it to be. It represents average performance and by no means brands its possessor as illiterate or unable to learn!

I am happy that Mr. Harke is succeeding at his studies and is in the third year of a Ph.D. program; but I am dismayed at his seeming unwillingness to let others strive for the same success. We should not be intellectual elitists, but should give others — including those with 60% averages — a chance to prove themselves if they

so desire.

Yours sincerely,
S. Bieger

Multiple managers

To the Editors:

A fairly elaborate feature was published in a recent Gazette about financial shortages in Canadian universities. A striking quotation was that "Dalhousie now has two people changing light bulbs. It used to have six." I would like to complete this statement, so as to provide the omitted, but crucial, explanation:

Dalhousie used to have six people changing lightbulbs, and two people managing these six people. Now Dalhousie has two people changing light bulbs, and six people managing them, and another two administrators managing each pair of the six aforementioned managers, and three committees on light-bulb personnel management, and . . .

(Clearly, the emphasis is on the spirit of the problem — it is much too complicated for anyone sane to try to calculate with numerical accuracy.)

With some respect for the Incomprehensible Political mesh,

Steve Oore

Opinion

by Kirsten Nichols

By 1997 the government of Canada hopes to have received its planned fleet of nuclear powered submarines.

The year is 1997 and a flurry of activity at the Halifax-Dartmouth ship yards centred upon nuclear-powered submarine *Beatty* now docked at home base for routine maintenance, signifies that all may not be well.

The power supply to the primary cooling system for the nuclear reactor has failed. As well the two back-up systems also failed to operate, as heat and radiation are rising to dangerous levels within

the reactor core. While alarm sound over the ship yard, two men race to start up a diesel generator as an alternative power source to the cooling system. They manage to stabilize the reactor, but must be treated for radiation exposure. An independent expert examining the data says an explosion could have resulted in radioactive contamination of a 2,000 square miles area.

The suggestion that Metro could be contaminated would be disturbing enough if the situation described had not already happened in 1988 at Faslane, Scotland.

At that time the official press release called the incident a

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