

The Dalhousie Gazette

CANADA'S OLDEST COLLEGE NEWSPAPER



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Personal Criticism

The Gazette has received some criticism for the personal attack on Dr. Engel. It should be made clear that the article does not even once refer to him by name; neither does it criticize the course which he teaches any more harshly than several of the other courses which the Department offers.

The only "personal attack" delivered upon Dr. Engels was in associating him with the examination of his own composition that appeared on page one of last week's GAZETTE. Certainly there were some questions on the examination which were slightly more difficult than those which were printed. Certainly a number of people could not correctly remember the height of a door knob to the nearest half foot. But surely the point to be made is that on a "methods" course students were being EXAMINED on the basis of their retention of grade five mathematics, and not on the ways of teaching grade five mathematics.

Any student who is capable of obtaining an Arts or Science degree is capable of learning, without special tutorage, the material to be covered in any course which he is teaching. To say that this is untrue would be to make a complete farce of our whole educational system, which in turn would only emphasize the fact that the Department needs radical changes.

Doctor Engels is not alone in ignoring this opinion and emphasizing "content" courses instead of real methods courses. Both Prof. and Mrs. Mowat follow the same approach, be it right, wrong, or a mixture of both.

Credibility Chasm

A key turning point in the Vietnam war occurred in August 1964 when the US Congress gave the President the "authority" to carry the war to the North. Johnson has always cited this resolution in defence from his critics who claim that he has usurped the power to declare war (unofficially) from the representatives of the American people.

The resolution was passed in an orgy of patriotic fury following Administration and Pentagon charges that two U.S. destroyers were attacked in the Gulf of Tonkin by North Vietnamese torpedo boats. It authorized the president to take "all necessary measures to prevent further aggression and to assist in defence of South Vietnam's freedom."

But the U.S. Senate has now made public closed-door testimony by William Bundy revealing that the draft of the resolution was prepared in advance of the Tonkin 'attack,' as a "matter of normal contingency planning."

Last summer a team of Associated Press reporters interviewed officers and men aboard the two destroyers and found wildly conflicting reports on what occurred during the alleged attack.

The captain of the Maddox admitted that he "was becoming less and less convinced that night that somebody was there." To add to the growing scepticism about the Tonkin incident, a well known liberal magazine, The Nation, recently published a story on the attack. The sonar man on one of the destroyers was said to have stated that he heard no sonar noises resembling that of torpedoes on the night in question.

What does this do to the 'credibility gap' - that euphemism for bigger lies from the White House? The gap has become a chasm which has split the American people in two. A recent Gallup poll showed that 46% of Americans disagree with Government policy in Vietnam - while Johnson and his apologists keep crying 'Consensus.'

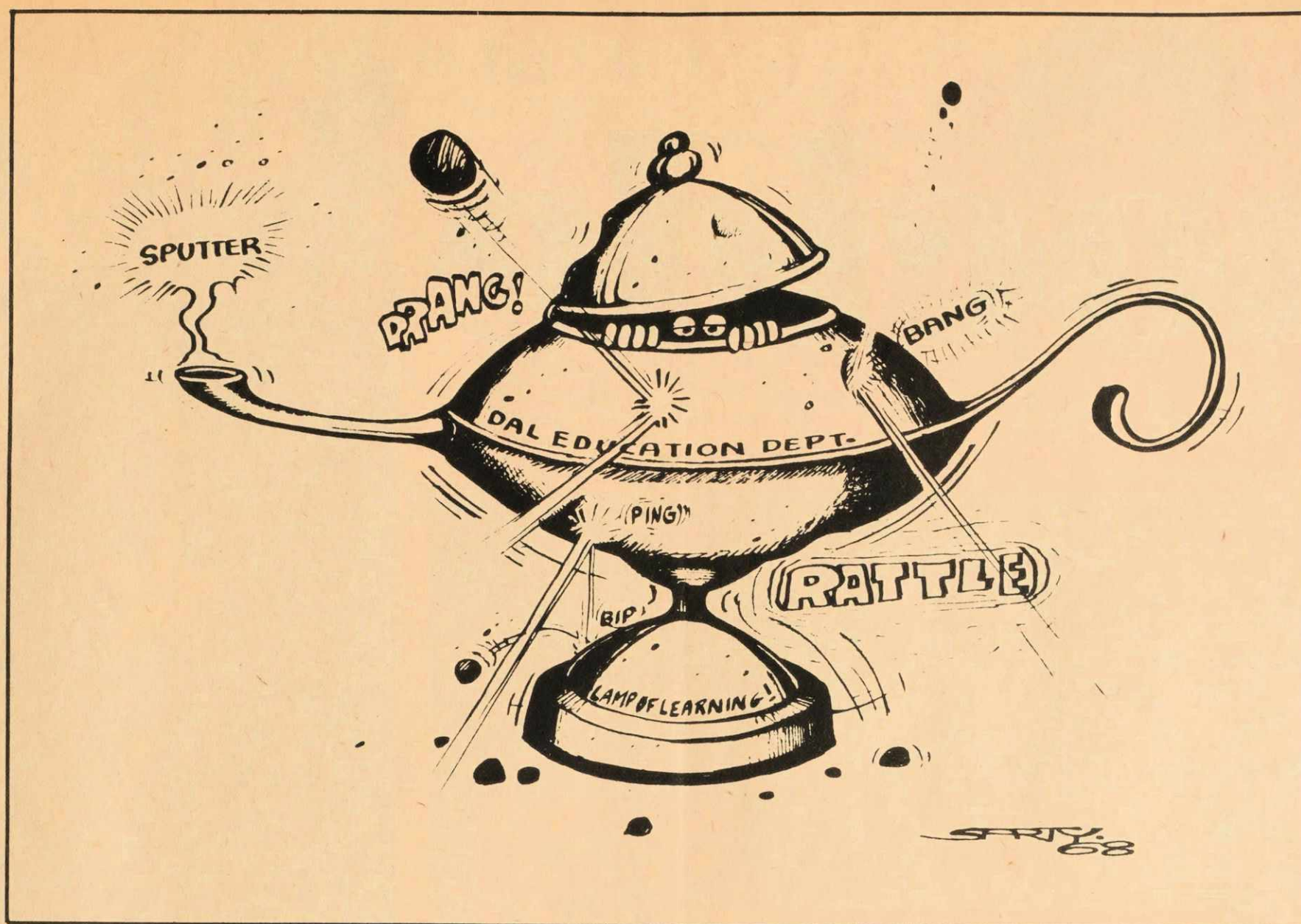
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An examination of The Department of Education

PETER ROBSON

Lately, the Department of Education at this University has come under heavy criticism from students within the course and ridicule from many not involved. It is far past time that an analytical examination was made. The good must be separated from the bad, regardless of the pain that this may cause to any one individual. The good must be kept, to be of benefit to students yet to come. The bad must be ruthlessly destroyed.

Let me first assume that the department has an aim - to educate those who wish themselves to become educators, to prepare them to take their place in their chosen profession. All courses should have this as the prime reason for their existence, or be discontinued or moved to the domain of another department.

The individual courses must be examined under this criteria, and action taken on the result. It would be easy to tear each course apart in detail, here in the Gazette. It would not, however, be an interesting proceeding for those not involved in the course as it is now set up. For the purposes of this letter, let us simply say that every course, without exception, needs to be changed. Some need to be united with others, some moved to other departments, and some completely done away with.

I would like to suggest that a committee be set up, to discuss the problem of curriculum changes. This committee would be made up of three professors, to be appointed by the head of the department, and three students, to be appointed by the Education Society. The pros and cons of all possible changes could then be argued out carefully, but without the chance that decisions made will be without at least the knowledge of the students. What I hope

to avoid by this suggestion is a very common practice of staff! They willingly listen to any suggestion, but are not as willing to take action. If they can put the students off for a while, they seem to think that the matter will be forgotten. We cannot afford to have the suggestions for improvement in this department slide into the bureaucratic staff machine, where they may become forever lost.

Before moving on to other branches of criticism of the department, I have one more suggestion to make to promote some sort liaison between staff and students. The Education Society should be represented at all faculty meetings, and have a say in the proceedings there.

This would probably serve two purposes. First, the meetings would probably be shorter; if a professor had nothing to say, the chances are that he would not ramble on unnecessarily. The student might serve as a catalyst in getting some work done. Secondly, the students would have a direct line to the whole faculty, so that the faculty will know where the students stand, and vice versa.

There are many on campus who are not aware of the problems encountered in the department; even the ones who are laughing are in most cases enjoying the stories and rumors about individual professors and their alleged incompetence. In some cases this is unfortunately true.

In other cases, the blame must in all fairness be placed elsewhere. Each member of staff (the same staff that has been bitterly condemned) does, I feel, try to present a good lecture. That he does not may be due to the fact that he is teaching too many courses, often double the number other departments require of their lecturers. The member of staff may indeed be incompetent, but the present work

load does not give him a fair chance.

Even while the professors are overworked, since the department has only half the professors required to teach the number of courses offered, the students are also overloaded, at least as to class time. Last term, I had twenty-six class hours per week, scheduled so that there was no length of free time any day between the hours of 8:30 and 5:30. The few hours spent out of class are at awkward times, and are difficult to use to best advantage. Unfortunately, the mark obtained on some courses (for example, 40% of the mark in Education 10 is based largely on attendance).

The final disappointing thing about the department is the facilities and the equipment. They are pathetic. Look for yourself, any day between the hours of nine and five. This must change.

In the course of this article, which is admittedly only the personal opinion of one student, every facet of the department has been criticized, from curriculum through staff to facilities. I firmly believe that they all need this criticism. Plus much more of a personal nature that must not go into print. The quality of the Education Department determines the quality of the teacher, and that in turn directly influences the quality of the student entering the university. If we wish to raise the percentage of students going on to university from present 8.1% at least up to the national average of 9.5%, we must start here, at this university, with a teacher training program that is at least adequate. To be sure, many excellent teachers graduate from this university every year. However, I personally wonder if this is because of, or in spite of, the training offered by the Department.

Sane or senseless?

The Free School Movement

By TERRY CAMPBELL
FOR CANADIAN UNIVERSITY PRESS

VANCOUVER (CUP)—When 13-year-old Duncan Innes goes to school, he is going because he wants to. Nobody will phone his parents if he doesn't turn up. And yet both Duncan and his parents feel he is getting a far better education this year than in past years.

Duncan is a student at the Barker Free School in Vancouver—one of a new breed of schools that are rapidly cropping up across the nation.

Nobody knows exactly what a free school is. Between Christmas and New Year's representatives of eight free schools from across the country spent several days at the New School in Vancouver trying to answer, among other things, that very question.

The conclusions reached were more non-conclusions. Those present learned they agreed on some things, disagreed on others. The only thing they were unanimous upon was that the present public school system is incapable of coping with modern educational requirements.

Represented at Vancouver were Toronto's Everdale Place, Toronto's Rochdale College, Winnipeg's Who House, the Winnipeg Free School, the Viewpoint non-school at Argentea, B.C., Vancouver's New School, Barker Free School, and Knowledge.

With the exception of Rochdale College, all these schools or non-schools cater to elementary or secondary school-age students. Rochdale is a co-operative residence for college-age students that strives to offer a unique educational environment.

But while those who staff the schools are less than certain how to describe their operations, the students who attend have few if any reservations.

Take Duncan Innes for example. Before he was sent to the Barker Free School, he was what is known as a "problem child."

"I didn't get along," says Duncan, an unusually articulate youngster for his age, describing his public school career. "I used to throw things and get into trouble."

Duncan says his mother sent him to Barker because of this rebelliousness. "I always liked to hear them shout at me," he says. "But now I like school."

Last year, while attending public school, Duncan missed 30 days because he was "sick." "Sick of school, I guess," he says.

To date this year he has missed only one day. "But I didn't have to say I was sick. I just didn't feel like going so I went somewhere else instead."

Each school day for Duncan begins with a meeting. The students at his school—all elementary age—at-

tend a general meeting each morning at which they decide what they will do for the day.

This aspect of the free schools is generally widespread—the active participation by students in the decision-making processes of the school. "If the teachers want one thing and we want another, we outvote them," Duncan says.

The crucial question however, is whether the free school gives a better education than the traditional public school. "I feel I am learning more now than I was before," says Duncan.

A schoolmate of Duncan's, 14-year-old Clay Ray, was less willing to assert this point, but admitted it was generally so. "But sometimes the teachers get pushy and try to run things. Then we won't talk to them, and we don't find out anything."

Clay, brushing back his shoulder-length blonde hair (there are no dress restrictions in free schools), tells of the type of things he does at school.

Well, one time we built a still," he says.

The question was obvious. What were they going to do with the still?

"Make booze, I guess."

"No, not really. But we never got to make the booze because the little kids wrecked the still."

Suppose they hadn't wrecked the still, would you have known how to make booze?

"Oh, it's simple," explained Clay, somewhat eager to display his knowledge. "You make a mash and you put yeast in it..." He went on to explain quite clearly the process of fermentation.

The he described how the different liquids in the mash boiled at different temperatures and how this enabled one to separate the vapors in a still and then condense the vapors to get booze. "Of course, you can use it for other things like making clean water," he added.

Here was a 14-year-old boy at an elementary school level giving me a somewhat comprehensive high-school physics and chemistry lecture.

"The main thing is to meet the needs—both personal and academic—that the kids themselves recognize," explains Gordon Mackie, a student at the University of Manitoba and one of the most articulate spokesmen for the free school movement. He is currently involved in getting up a free school in Winnipeg for dissatisfied high school students and dropouts.

The mainstream schools aren't meeting their needs," he says. "For the student, it is a question of what I need to know. You can't tell me what I need to know."

For example, three-, four-, five-year-old kids need to learn to read. They know this. Everything

they see around them is in print. You give them books and you should watch them gobble them up."

With the youths he is working with in Winnipeg, the needs are different, Mackie says. "These kids need to know how to structure interpersonal relationships. At the conventional high school level, relationships seem to be based on economic rather than human grounds—you know, the best guy is the one with the flashiest car."

Bob Barker, the founder of the Barker Free School, generally agrees. A balding 54, he is a senior figure in the movement.

"What we are trying to do is bring people up so that they are best able to cope with life today and life tomorrow. The mainstream schools are failing at this for two reasons."

"First, the means of the traditional school are too limited. You can't educate people when you have 40 to a class."

"Second, there is the bogy and fear of public opinion. Public school teachers, because they are public servants, are afraid to act. But so are politicians, and they are acting all the time. I call it a bogy because I don't think it actually exists."

Mr. Barker feels the "whip theory of education"—his label for the public school system—does not produce persons capable with life. "All it produces are narrowly educated robots. We don't want kids to qualify for the status quo; we want them to qualify for changing the status quo. The most important thing is what we are doing for the kids."

But while they are successful dealing with youngsters, the free schools are having definite problems ensuring themselves financial security. They are officially private schools and as such are not eligible for government grants.

Mr. Barker admits his school would have been out of business this year if the Company of Young Canadians had not agreed to pay the salaries of his staff. "We charge parents what they can afford to pay, but this doesn't nearly cover our costs. If it weren't for the CYC, we couldn't have operated this year."

As in most free schools (the New School in Vancouver is an exception), Mr. Barker's staff are being paid minimal salaries. The CYC also pays salaries at the Toronto area's Everdale Place and Vancouver's Knowledge.

Mr. Barker hopes some of the financial problems will be met by an independent foundation now being incorporated by a group of Vancouver business and professional people. The foundation will attempt to raise funds for free schools. "But if we don't get CYC help next year, we could be in trouble," he says. Right now he doesn't know where next year's funds are coming from.

Greatest Failure

Dear Sir:
You and your staff are to be congratulated for having the courage to voice what many Education students have been thinking regarding the value of the present Education course at Dalhousie. It is indeed unfortunate that such an action should require courage, since it is the primary duty of a university newspaper to express the opinions of various student groups, and in this case, the student group makes up an important section of Dalhousie graduates-to-be.

My first reaction to your publication of this exciting dissatisfaction was one of surprise and apprehension, for, after all, one just doesn't criticize one's professors, does one? However, I suddenly realized that it was only a traditional but groundless fear of a department's reprisals which made sincere and constructive criticism seem like audacity. Surely, I thought, the members of the Education Department will not be aggravated by this criticism, since, if it true, they would naturally profit from it and correct the faults which were pointed out. If the criticism has no basis, who but the Education Department should better realize that the best way to deny criticism would be to issue a statement correcting any erroneous charges and explaining their own views on the matter; in other words, "educating" those who spoke in ignorance or error. My natural respect for those individuals who educate educators denied the possibility that these individuals might not accept the articles broad-mindedly, as criticism, whether they agreed with them or not.

It is therefore with surprise and disappointment that I (who am taking classes in Education) am struck by the Department's reaction to your articles. Some professors flatly condemn any expression of such criticism, and others refuse to comment at all. There is a growing need for students who criticize to keep their identities secret, for those who speak openly are condemned in the classroom. Words like "witch-hunt" are being used in connection with the department's disapproval of these students' actions. There are some who claim that the Gazette's articles have ruined any chance of bringing about improvements in the Department, but it should be obvious that, if this criticism serves to halt improvement rather than speed it, then the Gazette has at least managed to expose the greatest failure of all by the Education Department; the failure of display the broad-mindedness which it is supposedly encouraging in the minds of Dalhousie's Education students.

In light of this indignant, almost outraged reaction to your articles, it is perhaps worthwhile to consider the old (but relevant) adage that "criticism never hurts, unless it should."

Name Withheld (by request)

Problems not new

January 12, 1967

To the Editor:

Last week's article 'Education no laughing matter but...' evidently was written by persons suffering from post-examination blues. There is a very stilted and bitter attitude permeating throughout the article that is shared only by a few of the education students who perhaps by not attending classes have not given the Education program a chance. In our classes and seminars, the professors have been more than courteous in accepting criticism of subject matter and methods.

The problems of teacher-training are not new. The Administration and professors in Dalhousie's Education Department have extended an effort in making the transition for students from the aloofness of an undergraduate degree to the actual field experience necessary for teacher-training. Also co-operating teachers throughout the city and the province have attempted to make this teacher-training course a valuable experience.

To give an unfair picture of the B. Ed. program on the basis of parts of some examinations is a case of not being able to see the forest for the trees. It seems that the people who wrote last week's article are not interested in improving the education program with some worthwhile suggestions but were concerned with presenting a dramatic and thoroughly superficial editorial.

The Education courses at Dalhousie have stimulated new attitudes and awarenesses of what teaching is all about, without which we should be severely handicapped when confronted with the actual classroom situation. I am not accepting the 'status quo' as the only way of training teachers, but I feel that it is a very useful attempt. There could be improvements in some presentations of courses but there could also be improvements in our response to some of the courses. It is my hope that those who wrote last week's articles, perhaps out of post-exam anger, have had a chance to reconsider their position and try to co-operate instead of condemn in an effort to make our teacher-training experience a valuable one.

An interested Education student

SAEWW ANTI-WAR STRATEGY

By CHRIS THURROTT

A campaign to fight local campus complicity in the Vietnam War was planned by students at a U of T conference over the Christmas break.

120 participants, representing campuses from Halifax to Vancouver met at Hart House in an assembly called by the Student Association to End the War in Vietnam. The assembly also voted to mobilize a Canada-wide day of protest on February 9th centered on the theme of ending campus complicity.

Among the guest speakers at the assembly was Laurier Lapierre, former host of the 7 Days show, and now Vice President of the Federal NDP. In a ten minute speech, Lapierre fully supported the assembly and harshly condemned American involvement in Vietnam. He stated that the Canadian government does not condemn the American aggression because "our economy is so intertwined with the United States that it is best to please our customers."

"Essentially the country is not independent, and it is this that frightens me," he said.

On the first day of the conference the students also heard from Syd Stapleton, a leader of the Student Mobilization Committee in the States. Discussing the October 21st action which the SMC organized, he outlined plans for a student strike for the 10th to 20th of April. He predicted that this global action would meet with favourable response from students around the world.

A message of support for the SAEWW assembly was received from Doug Ward, past president of CUS, and numerous student government representatives from across Canada.

The assembly dealt with the vital question of building a student anti-war movement on the campuses, a movement which could mobilize thousands of students unaffiliated to any existing political ideology, but who are being radicalised by the Vietnam issue. In their campaign to "Drive the Warmakers Off the Campus" the students look to support from the expanding "Student Power" movement.