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## LITTLE MAN ON CAMPUS



"I DON'T UNDERSTAND WHY I'M NOT PERMITTED TO ENROLL—THESE TEST SCORES ALONE PROVE I NEED AN EDUCATION MORE THAN THE REST OF THOSE GLIYS!"

# Education: An Opportunity And An Obligation

During this week many new students will enroll at Dalhousie. They will come from many varied backgrounds and many countries, yet all will have one common goal — to graduate; to absorb sufficient knowledge to pass their yearly exams while at the same time getting a maximum amount of enjoyment from the extra-curricular life of the university.

But what, if anything, can be said about the duties and freedoms, the roles and the chances which will confront these people during their stay on our campus? Are there or should there be unifying forces which will bind all Dalhousie students together or is each student's major duty to soak up as much knowledge as possible in whatever areas interest him?

The college is often thought of as an island community set apart from the continent of life, the student years as an interlude between childhood and citizenship. There is some truth in this for the college student has the opportunity to view the world beyond his campus boundaries with more detachment and perspective than he is likely to be able to muster later.

Nevertheless this outlook ignores the fact that the citadels of learning are integral parts of life, not appendages. We cannot soak up knowledge now for use later and as Alfred North Whitehead, an American philosopher, once said:

"The mind is never passive, it is a perpetual activity, delicate, receptive, responsive to stimuli. You cannot postpone its life until you have sharpened it. Whatever subject matter appeals to you must be investigated in the present, whatever powers are being strengthened in the student must be exercised here and now".

Education does **not** operate in the single dimension of the memory or with the single objective of vocational preparation. It seeks to inspire excitement about ideas and to develop the ability to think, to stimulate a reexamination of values leading to the development of character, to create a realization by the individual that, in a free society, the public welfare and the common good are the responsibility of each individual and especially of those individuals with the special abilities and training which come from a college education.

Yet today it is common for students to see problems and avoid involvement, to criticize and offer no constructive solution, to complain of inadequacies on their campus and to accept them as unchangeable. These viewpoints, as one writer pointed out, "represent a conscious or unconscious abdication of responsibility." If, indeed, the individual student

can do nothing, then there is little reason for him to try. If on the other hand he can correct the defects he sees then the vision should prompt action. It is well worth remembering that on the campus and in the world, everything that is thought, every change that is made, everything that is done is initiated, and thought by individuals.

At the same time the student should be concerned about knowledge, about ideas, about truth. And yet we find that incoming freshmen are made aware that the road to status in the college community is social not intellectual. In their quest for status they adopt those values necessary for this kind of achievement and in turn pass on that tradition to subsequent classes. In this manner, an unbroken chain of values is established in which intellectual traits are definitely subordinate.

Thus it has become imperative that each new student learn that even in purely vocational terms it is more important to know how to think than to have vast stores of data memorized. When viewed as a preparation for life, the interest in ideas and concepts and the desire to explore and understand the new worlds of the mind are more important elements than specific factual gains. This attitude has been lost by most North American students because they regard exams and hence factual information as the only yardstick with which ability can be measured.

"To test belief by various methods, to find standards by which interpretations of tragedy and joy may be evaluated, for assessing common sense judgements of good and evil, for accepting new ideas into the cultural heritage or rejecting them as passing illusions of a disordered brain — such are the tasks of dwellers in the citadel of learning."

Character cannot be taught, it comes solely from a student's response to opportunities and challenges. Values cannot be taught either, but they are — or should be — the results of intense thought and questioning. A university can and should provide opportunities for a student to re-examine and evaluate his values in the light of those held by others, living and dead. It is through examining and clarifying our values that we can make them meaningful, and, through applying them to situations that we can make them shape our lives and those of our friends and acquaintances.

To many it seems paradoxical to speak of individuality and of unified goals in the same breath. Nevertheless these are the ultimate goals of the university and its students. For it is in the integration of our ideals and actions, of our diff-

erent interests and of our contradictory ambitions, that we become most truly human beings.

There is a false form of individualism which is founded on the refusal to accept the yoke of commitment to any ideal bigger than the self, for it is this yoke which is the basis of real individuality and real freedom. The unity of a university is a unity of goals, of the search for a deeper knowledge and understanding, and it is not the monolithic unity of the total state. As T. S. Eliot once commented :

"The unity of culture, in contrast to the unity of political organization does **not** require us all to have one loyalty . . . there should be an endless conflict between ideas — for it is only by the struggles against constantly appearing false ideas that the truth is enlarged and clarified."

We who are here at Dalhousie have been presented with an opportunity — the opportunity to attend university. This opportunity carries with it a series of obligations and responsibilities which come with the role of a student:

- 1) To develop the ability to think, to criticize, to examine and to decide.
- 2) To accept the challenges of ideals and values beyond oneself and to apply these ideals and values in everyday life.
- 3) To respect the dignity of the individual human being and to realize that no man is ever good enough to seek to make another in his own image.
- 4) To accept a feeling of social consciousness and responsibility for the welfare of ones fellow man beginning with the next student.
- 5) To determine to apply thought, ideals and tolerance on the campus and in the greater community in major decisions and in daily details.

If we feel that these are stern demands, we are right. Any part of free society, whether a university or a body politic, places heavy burdens on its members precisely because the individual is seen as the primary. We must seek to meet these demands, to fulfill the idea of a student, in the realization that no man can go far if he checks the sidewalk before him at each step.

It is up to every one of us, whether we be freshmen or seniors, to realize that intellectual and moral ambitions require the laying of courses by and toward the unseen stars of truth. Only in following these courses will we achieve the real goal of a university education.