

### Task Force on communications

# Biggest problem seen but no suggestions

Commissioned by President Brian Smith in March 1971, and completed May 5, 1972, at the cost of \$798. The Task Force on the Quality of Student Life was chaired by D. Ray Pierce, former Communications Advisor of the Student Union.

Besides Pierce, there were

two core members, Wayne W. Hooper and James G. Sykes. As a result of its efforts, the Task Force produced a massive 100,000 word document containing some 41 recommendations.

In its September 22 edition, Gazette published all 41 of these recommendations. In the next few issues the Gazette will evaluate these recommendations in light of their involvement and the possible

consequences of the recommendations, if implemented. This week — communications.

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"Conciseness and accuracy are more important than hard-headed clarity." So began the theme in Chapter I. Unfortunately it was precisely these three elements, conciseness, accuracy and clarity that were so noticeably absent among the eleven communication recommendations. Throughout Chapter I on Communications, the Task Force offers few real solutions, only vague platitudes of right and wrong, good and bad. Take for example, the Task Force's summarizing recommendations, "that communications — both internal and external — be drastically rearranged as it is our belief it is the most critical problem facing the university community today."

For all its good intentions, does this statement actually draw us any closer to the real problem of how the communication gap at Dalhousie may be closed.

Likewise in recommendation #4, "that duplicative communications be reduced except where particular conflicting interests may arise." How does the Task Force expect such problems as "duplicative communications" to be remedied when no concrete examples are provided of such duplication.

Most of the Task Forces comments regarding the upgrading of Communication organizations within the Student Union are likewise meaningless: "It is our belief

they are not operating to their potential."

If the Task Force chases to attack such organization as the Gazette and Dal Radio for not operating to their potential, then the Task Force itself should operate to its potential by explaining how these organizations might operate more successfully. The Task Force must also realize that the current lack of communication at Dalhousie is mainly attributable to the many closed meetings at the higher levels of the University.

While the Task Force wisely recommended "that all university meetings be open and generally accessible to all members of the community," this is merely a starting point. The University public must also be made aware of the many meetings being held throughout this University and all levels of the University should be encouraged to attend such meetings.

In its recommendations to improve the effectiveness of University News, the task force seems to have completely overlooked the negative reaction by students toward this organization during open task force hearings last year. At that time it was discovered that lines established for feedback within the University News are almost non-existent. It was also reported that in its entire two-year operation, the University News has never received and will not accept any student input.

One area which has become an increasing sore point to students is the orientation program. As a result of its homework in this field the Task Force suggested a four week orientation program be attempted in future years. It also suggested that splashy events be replaced with events designed to bring people together on a more personal basis. The lack of any academic orientation also came under attack as the source of so many hassles during registration.

In the area of university-community relations, the Task Force began bravely with a quotation from Alfred North Whitehead, "Cellbacy does not suit a university. It must mate itself with action."

Deriding the ivory tower image of Dalhousie, the Task Force then suggested in rather vague terms that Dalhousie should become an active par-

ticipant within the community. Unfortunately for all its quoting of reknowned American educators, the Task Force was not so daring as to take a stand on this issue.

In recommendation #9, they passed the buck by suggesting that "an independent study be initiated to examine university community relations."

One communication recommendation that is aimed in the right direction is recommendation #6 which states: "That student societies and committees be encouraged to involve professors, administrators and members of the community-at-large in their organizations to increase one-to-one interface within the university with the community, and further that faculty and staff be advised by the administration such extra class activity be part of their duty in the university."

Unfortunately one cannot help but wonder how faculty and staff can be obligated to take part in any extra class activities without an increase in present salaries. For all its worth, the Task Force may as well have advised the administration that extra office work be part of their duty on the university.

One of the few meaningful recommendations of the Task Force was #7:

"Tests in fluency be given to all professors, instructors, lecturers, and demonstrators whose mother tongue is not English to ensure effective communication with students in educative situations."

If students must put up with overcrowded, over-heated and under-lit classrooms, they should at least be entitled to professors whom they can understand and communicate with.

Many of the current problems which beset Dalhousie can be attributed directly or indirectly to the too rapid expansion of this university. Part of this dubious honour belongs to the School Liaison Committee for its brilliant job of selling classroom seats. Nevertheless the Task Force seems to ignore the fact that students now pay more for fewer services, by recommending that "continued support be given to the School Liaison Committee, as long as its purpose is to provide information and guidance to the potential student, and not to sell classroom seats."

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**Students from Moncton**

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Contact: Scott Ellsworth  
Room 247, Bronson House  
Howe Hall  
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Deadline: October 13.