

The Dalhousie GAZETTE

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THE MID-TERM BREAK

The senate last Thursday passed a resolution giving Dalhousie Students a mid-term break on the four days following Munro Day. The decision to cancel classes from March 14, to March 18 was made after more than a year of consultation between the faculty and the student's council.

In addition to the days selected for the break two other proposals were put forward by the student committee. One suggested that the break be given on a Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday of the week following Munro Day while the other alternative was to cancel lectures on the Saturday and Monday just prior to Munro Day.

The Gazette favours the former of these two proposals, primarily because it would discourage students from going home over Munro Day. Under the newly adopted regulation a student can leave here on Saturday noon and return eight days later and only miss one day of classes.

It seems inevitable that a large percentage of the student body will do this, and by doing so will eliminate much of the enjoyment and meaning which has come to be associated with Munro Day. This annual one day break has always marked the end of all student activities. It has been the time when student leaders in athletics and organizations were honoured for their contributions to student life. It has been an occasion for all Dalhousians to get together and have fun before settling down to the grind of studying for exams.

It may well be that this year will see a marked decline in this annual display of Dalhousie spirit.

And so, while we are pleased and grateful to the senate for giving us this break, we hope that the way will be left open for future negotiations which will lead to the mid-term break being given at a better time.

We hope too that next years student's council will begin such negotiations as soon as it takes office.

BOOKS AND RECORDS

Among the variety of buildings found on any university campus, the library is surely one of the most important. Holding, as it does, the very stuff around which a university is centred, a library must by a prime consideration of any university administration.

Dalhousie students have appreciated steps taken this year to improve the MacDonald Memorial Library. The separation of books into two reading rooms has given more room not only to the "last ditch" students before examinations, but also to those who pursue their studies faithfully throughout the year.

But the problem is far from solved. Space is still severely limited, both for students wishing to use the reading rooms and for those using the stacks. And the stacks themselves obviously cannot hold books indefinitely.

We presume the administration appreciates the constant demand for more volumes made by both students and faculty. We also presume the administration is allocating as much money as is possible for library additions. Pressed continually for increases at all levels of university functions, it is, of course, impossible for administration officials to give all new monies to the library. It would be difficult, for example, to decide whether an extra \$10,000 should be used to buy more books for the

library or to devote it to badly-needed salary increases for the faculty.

However, it is understood that the university is about to embark upon a drive to raise funds. Despite the difficulties we have noted in assigning more money to the library, we must again stress the maximum attention that must be paid to library expansion. One need not look at universities farther west than Mount Allison to realize the tremendous expansion in library facilities that is taking place.

There is one extension of the library that should also receive greater benefits. The music room, located on the third floor of the Arts and Administration Building, has for many years provided a haven for those who could no longer sit through the thick smoke and equally thick conversation of the canteen.

Although the music room is a highly commendable move on the part of the university to provide music to those students to whom it is not generally available, it is a great misfortune that those in charge of its use have for so long not seen fit to enlarge the collection of records contained in the room. The records now in the room are for the most part old, scratched and unfit to play on any sort of record player.

Many of Dalhousie's music lovers have long since abandoned the room, faced, as they are, by the same collection of poor recordings. Addition of more and better records would be most effective methods of combatting the use of the room for purposes other than listening.

A POOR IMAGE

The Student's Council elections have been postponed because of a lack of candidates for the positions of president and vice-president. Constitutionally there must be two candidates for each of these positions, in order that no one can win either of these offices by acclamation.

It seems incredible that out of more than two thousand people there are not four who are willing to run for the executive of the student's council. The opportunity which these positions offer for experience in handling meetings, and running an organization, is immense. Surely there must be a few people at Dalhousie who would value such an opportunity.

Why then are there so few people willing to run for office? It would appear that there are two main reasons. One, of course, is apathy. The second involves the student's council itself. In the eyes of most students, the council appears as a weak organization. They cannot see what duties it performs other than administer the finances of campus organizations. They regard as dull all the routine paperwork which inevitably falls upon any form of government. Thus so many of those who are competent to do the job become disinterested.

It is regrettable that such an image exists, for, while much of it is true, the council is not always as dull as one would believe. There are times when the council does accomplish something, and it is only under the guidance of a good president and vice-president that these accomplishments are achieved.

It is with this in mind that several prospective candidates should reconsider their decision not to run. For they too should be willing to try and accomplish something which would improve life here at Dalhousie.

LITTLE MAMA CAMPUS



The Critical Eye

B. ED. — USEFUL OR USELESS

Some of the criticisms regularly levelled against Canadian education are that many of our teachers are poorly trained, overworked, and in a number of cases, incompetent of performing the tasks demanded of them. To help meet the pressing needs of the educational system many universities across the country have developed faculties of education to train teachers capable of guiding the mental and physical development of one of this nation's greatest assets — its youth.

The graduates of education schools are welcomed with open arms by school boards and principals urgently trying to swell their meagre staffs. But, one might ask, are these new teachers, on whom so much depends, really receiving the most suitable training to help them deal with the numerous problems that arise from day to day both in and out of the classroom.

To be admitted to the course leading to the degree of Bachelor of Education, a student must (at Dalhousie at least) "have received the BA, BSc, or BCom degree from a college or university recognized by the Senate for the purpose." Indeed some of these candidates for the education degree have already received post-graduate experience in various fields, if not actually possessing a Master's degree.

Having registered for the course leading to a BEd, the student attends lectures on such topics as the 'General Principles of Education', the 'Theory and History of Education', 'Educational Psychology', and methods of teaching various grades, all, as far as the student is concerned at this point, of a highly theoretical nature. Here, perhaps, is where the system falls down.

To qualify for the degree students are required to undertake a period of 'field work', or practical teaching in a school, where, presumably, they are expected to apply the theories fed to them in lectures. But

how, one might ask, can a prospective teacher get the feel of the classroom in such a short period? Another flaw in the system would seem to be that students intending to teach at high school level are often assigned to grade six or seven classes, while the timid young grade two teacher finds herself facing pupils of grade ten standing.

Be that as it may, the very fact that the course emphasizes theory to such an extent surely means that students graduate with a woefully one-sided training for their future duties. One might also question the worth of having courses given almost exclusively by members of the faculty of education who are dealing constantly with college students at a post graduate level, and have little practical contact with the grade school classroom.

Another aspect of the course is that lectures in Psychology, philosophy and related subjects, are given by the department of education, rather than by specialists in these fields from other departments in the university. In psychology, for example, one might suppose that the department of psychology would have considerable interest in how the grade school student's mind works and how best to deal with it.

Finally, the courses offered in the faculty of education are concerned mainly with the procedural approach to teaching rather than the content matter to be taught. While a student might be the proud holder of a BA degree, no doubt the occasion has arisen when a teacher who flunked, for example, math I in college a number of times, finds himself or herself struggling to impart mathematical lore to long suffering students in grade school. Perhaps some attention should be paid to brushing up the prospective teacher's knowledge of the subject he or she intends to teach, as well as filling him or her with high flown theories of education.