

Blind students act to obtain rights

In June of this year former students of the Halifax School for the Blind, set up the Blind Rights Action Movement known as BRAM. Its main objective is to see that blind people get their rights just like other people.

President Edward Russel said blind people are not given the advantage of their rights because they are not broadly educated. He stated that they are unable to get jobs due to the lack of vocational training at the School for the Blind and elsewhere.

In reply to the question, "What steps have you taken toward this goal?", president Russel said a brief had been drawn up and negotiations between staff and management at the school have taken place. BRAM has also established contacts with the government.

BRIEF CAUSES CONTROVERSY

The brief which has been drawn up has caused controversy at the school. In their brief, the movement attacked the staff of the School for the Blind by

referring to them as baby-sitters. One member of the school staff referred to the brief as unfair and a juvenile way of approaching their goal. Members of BRAM pointed out that it may be juvenile, but it's the only effort being made.

President Russel said the brief was a little too negative and that it was misunderstood by most staff members. The Board of Governors also felt that the brief was too negative and wouldn't accomplish its goal. As a result, the brief is being revised and will come up for discussion with members of the staff on Thursday, October 8.

LACK OF MONEY

"The main problem at the present is the lack of money and the lack of vocational training for the blind," said Russel. "I would like to see such vocational training as mechanics, auto body-building, radio and TV repair for the partially-sighted."

"Vocational training is certainly the problem of the blind and some agency should see to it, instead of people just

sitting around and arguing about this problem. Experts should be consulted to bring up ideas with regard to vocational training for the blind," Russel said.

"If we can't arouse the establishment to act, then we can at least bring it to the public's attention and trust that their conscience will move them to see that the authorities do give blind people a new deal.

"That is, a chance for life so they can achieve, as blind people, a quality of life to which they are entitled as Canadian citizens," said president Russel.

"We are not interested in a witch hunt or in kicking anyone's sacred cows," Russel continued. "We see a need to get a job done, and that's what we intend to do."

"We expect static because there is always some sort of discontent when you rock the boat."

"There is a need for what we are doing which takes priority over all else. The blind can't help themselves and the public can't help them if they are not informed of the situation," Russel concluded.

Schools must adapt to learning problems

By BETH NEILY

Nova Scotia educators treatment of children with learning disabilities came under strong attack as inadequate and "tokenistic" at a meeting Sept. 29 in the Dal SUB sponsored by the Dalhousie Students Union and members of the YMCA (Halifax) and the Inter-Agency on Youth.

Gilbert hits "tokenism"

Levelling the charge of tokenism was Halifax radio commentator John Gilbert. "As a concerned parent, as well as a radio commentator, I want action now," said Gilbert.

Students, parents and educators alike, shared the sense of frustration at the lack of progress in taking the action needed to solve the problem. One Dartmouth student, who said he had learning disabilities, spoke of students he knew who were "frustrated to the point of jumping off a bridge". And public school teachers and administrators from all over the province told pretty much the same story -- overcrowded classrooms, lack of qualified teachers to work with the disabled, lack of money.

"If someone gave us \$10,000,000 right now, maybe then we could do something to help these kids," a Dartmouth school board member said bitterly.

"Well, you get \$10,000,000 and then we'll work

something out," joked Dr. Thomas Tillemans, of Acadia University's education department, who was principal speaker.

Program outlined

Tillemans outlined a mobile clinic program which Acadia is starting this year in an effort to help children in the Annapolis Valley region's schools.

Tillemans said a staff of specialists and student assistants from Acadia will be visiting Annapolis Valley schools in a trailer clinic, which will offer students a diagnosis of their situations, counselling, and remedial work in their studies, and, where appropriate, supportive emotional therapy. Parents and teachers of children enrolled in the clinic will also be encouraged to receive counselling, although this will not be mandatory.

UNDERSTANDING ALSO NEEDED

Tillemans emphasized that children would need understanding as well as specialized therapy, such as the clinic would offer.

Since public school teachers cannot possibly cope with all the problems these students have, tutors and teaching assistants are also being provided, Tillemans said. He added that many more would be needed.

"We have to keep these children from feeling that they are different from others," said Tillemans. He pointed out that with the

clinic in operation, children now in special classes could go back to school with their friends and avoid feeling left out.

In response to a question to what was going to be done in the sections of the province without access to Acadia's facilities, local speakers cited a remedial physed program being carried on at the YMCA and two Dal courses in Education for teaching disabled children. But they conceded the inadequacy of these programs.

PUBLIC PRESSURE NEEDED

David MacKeen a Halifax city alderman, said most politicians are not aware of the magnitude of the problem. According to the CELDIC (Commission on Emotional and Learning Disorders in Children) Report, 1,000,000 children in Canada today "require attention, treatment and care because of emotional and learning disorders." This figure represents twelve per cent of the national population up to age nineteen.

McKeen said only public pressure applied by groups like parent-teacher associations and associations of specialists in children's learning disorders will bring the problem fully to the public's attention.

Only through such pressure, he said, would funds be made available to combat the problem.

Mange Bien

An Endeavor at a Critical Yet Humane Analysis of the Gastronomic Conditions Obtaining at our Fair University.

By JON PEIRCE

What would Brillat-Savarin make of a certain concoction of pasta and fluids which from time to time turns up in Howe and Shirreff dining rooms as macaroni? Would the salads therein served be the occasion for one of Claiborne's slightly peevish flashes of sardonic wit? Could James Beard find room in his heart for "Braised Short Ribs, Beaver?" Would the Galloping Gourmet consider that the person purchasing a S.U.B. "steak special" was getting good value? How would "apple pancake" stack up, in Julia Child's book, next to the French crepes?

Amusing but futile speculations, all. For institutional cooking, like justice in the military, is a law unto itself -- occasionally inexorable, at times, impenetrable, and not infrequently heavy-handed. The nuances that spice great dishes to delight the great palates could not, all too often, survive the steam tables. And, like all great art, great cooking (even great plain cooking) involves risks. It is one thing to take these risks when cooking for an 'audience' of eight or ten, or when (as at the better restaurants) one's risks are in a sense covered by patrons well-heeled enough to "put their money where their mouths are." But institutional cooking, involving the outlay of hundreds or thousands of dollars each day, cannot afford, either esthetically or economically, to take such risks; a fallen soufflé large enough to serve the entire university would indeed be a major blow-out, in every sense.

Thus it is manifestly unfair, as well as foolish, to judge institutional cooking on any but its own terms. Granted, it often makes mistakes it does not have to make. But a great many -- I should say the majority -- of complaints directed against it arise simply because not even the best institutional chef can do the impossible; and let us not forget, also, that it's a convenient scapegoat for student complaints more logically directed at other, if less convenient issues. What one must ask of institutional cooking is, does it provide an adequate and balanced diet, presented in attractive enough form so most are willing to eat it?

This is the same question I have always asked of institutional food -- and I've eaten a lot of it -- from prep school, where the coffee was, in my father's words, "Worse than the swill we got in the Army," and college, to a jail in upstate New York where, upon being incarcerated for speeding (and poverty), I spent most of the time until bail money arrived wondering which would carry me off first, typhoid from the open, fly-infested toilet, or ptomaine from the food, which had to be eaten in close proximity to said toilet.

That jail (my failure to report it immediately to the Board of Health was a sign of moral cowardice) represents the nadir of institutional cooking. . . greasy, starch-ridden, unvaried, and unpalatable. . . cuisine of the type that makes one understand a Peter de Vries character's longing for the chromium-plated diner across the street where the food has at least the virtue of being tasteless. At the opposite extreme, I am pleased to report after a dozen or more meals, in both Howe and Shirreff, lies most of the food served in the Dal dining halls. There are difficulties, which, I shall be pointing out shortly. But on the whole, the food is well-prepared, sensibly balanced, fairly pleasantly arranged -- and, most significantly for those of robust appetite, ample in quantity. "All you can eat" makes the meal ticket or even the single meal a good buy for those who, like yours truly, are as close to gourmands as gourmets. For the finicky, of course, that's another story. But the truly finicky are going to have trouble getting their money's worth out of a meal ticket in any event; at least the variety afforded at the dining halls gives less cause to be finicky than at most halls, where, where, if you don't like the main course, you're out of luck -- and pocket.

Returner a nos moutons, or, I should say, to our salads. Perhaps the most humane feature of the dining halls is the ample cold buffet, served at lunch and supper, and consisting of cold cuts, potatoes and green salads, cole slaw, breads, rolls, and relishes. Even in the event of a main dish's absolute impossibility, this assures an adequate if not exciting repast -- the potato and green salads, in particular, are really quite decent. Occasionally, once in a long while, there is cheese on the cold table. It would be nice to see the cheese there more often.

Entering the main serving area itself, usually in a foaming sweat (for reasons no one has explained to my satisfaction yet the dining area is kept at 78-80 degrees and the kitchen, naturally, is warmer than that), you again find a pretty good choice. The soups (I recommend particularly the fish chowder) all seem quite good and are a welcome addition, especially in cooler weather. In the main dishes (more often than not there is a choice of two) there is quite a wide range -- both the use of two and the existence of the cold plate give the

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