

editorial

Strike a blow for freedom

"A student's protest was too little, too late as Acadia University decided Monday they will pay 11 per cent more for their education in September."

Sound familiar? This was the lead sentence to an article written by Anna-Marie Gallante run in the Chronicle-Herald on Tuesday, 19 January. The University's Board of Governors decided to hurry through the vote to increase tuition without informing the Student's Union of their intentions, so even though Acadia rallied Tuesday with over 150 students attending a protest, it's a case of "too little, too late."

The vice-president and other members of the Acadia Student's Union presented the BoG with a paper outlining the different ways the University could save money without raising tuition. The tuition this year for a full-time undergraduate was \$2,625. Next year, it will be \$2,915. By the year 1997, the proposed increases would bring tuition to \$3,669.

Faculty salaries have also been frozen for two years now, and have just been voted by the Board to be out in the cold for a third. "Inadequate government funding," is the primary reason cited for these manoeuvres.

This week, a group of Dalhousie students camped out in the quad to protest the limiting of student attendance at the next BoG meeting. Only eighty students are being allowed to attend because the room in which the BoG will hold the meeting is limited by fire regulations as to its capacity. What clever planning. And you must book your tickets in advance.

Last year, hundreds of students rallied one Board of Governors meeting and were able to delay the vote to raise tuition fees. The Board then agreed to hear students' concerns in the MacInnes room, and hundreds of people argued for hours, trying to make information concerning fee scheduling accessible, trying to make the BoG accountable, and trying to freeze the fees.

The BoG voted for the tuition hike anyway.

What is the moral of the Dal story: well, last year they went through the motions, allowed us to have our little rampage, wasted some time, and then did what they wanted to do anyway. This year, they have decided to baldly ignore us and eliminate all that messy wrangling. It's not like any one of them lost sleep over the issue, because they napped nicely at the meetings.

What is the moral of the Acadia story: whatever you do as students will not be taken seriously. You will not be consulted. It will always be too little, too late.

I believe it's time to organize a walkout. In 1988/89, faculty at Dalhousie went on strike when contract negotiations with administration broke down. When the issue was finally resolved, students were left with three weeks of make-up work to do and no extra time in which to do it, but at least the clout of the faculty had been realized. It is time for Dalhousie administration to remember they are working for students. Write to the Gazette and tell us how you feel about going on strike.

Jennifer Beck

Redefined by its redefiners

For the last three years the sensationalized stories have appeared in popular American magazines. "The P.C. Front", "The Victim's Revolution", "The Storm Over The University" and "Thought Police" graced the covers of *Time*, *Newsweek*, *Atlantic* and *The New Republic*. According to these reports, university campuses have been overrun by vigilantes conducting witch hunts against professors, conservative students or right-wing lecturers who uphold the canon of western literature and thought.

Newsweek said in its December 1990 cover story "PC is, strictly speaking, a totalitarian philosophy. No aspect of university life is too obscure to come under its scrutiny".

Canadian campuses have not escaped this scrutiny. However, by focusing the debate surrounding "political correctness" to curriculum guidelines, we ignore the broader spectrum wherein the war on PC is being used to justify attacks on affirmative action policies for women and minorities, equity programs for minority students and the very right of existence for gay and lesbian student organizations.

Before we go any further let us define our terms lest *Newsweek* define them for us. My political correctness is not the same as their political correctness.

The phrase "political correctness" was first used by people on the ideological left as a sarcastic reference to others on the left whose political activity showed a greater concern for the form of oppression than its substance. It was a trend that developed during the disintegration of the 1960s

social movements and led to the currency of lifestyles politics - the movement centering on discussions about language and lifestyle. This move towards lifestyle politics also coincided with stepped up resistance and repression to the women's movement and Black Power movements and later led to their eventual fragmentation.

It is ironic then that those forces who once stood against these movements for social change have now appropriated their disintegration rhetoric to now use it to dismiss these movements as trivia and as mere grumbling from the disgruntled and oppressed masses.

"Freedom of speech is not the issue."

For the term "political correctness" has been removed from its original context and is now redefined and used by its redefiners to refer to and lead the attack upon any person or idea opposed to racism, bigotry, and sexism and demonstrably for multiculturalism and equity.

At issue for those leading the assault on the newly defined PC is the accusation that multiculturalism, pay and employment equity programs, affirmative action and discriminatory harassment policies will restrict freedom of speech by imposing speech codes. They even go so far as to say that these programs and policies will

impose the same ideological conformity as "McCarthyism".

However, the development of harassment policies and equity programs will provide little effectiveness, let alone totalitarianism when university administrators are seen to come to the defence of incidents of bigotry and discrimination.

Who really has the power to silence whom?

Freedom of speech is not the issue. Those who express concern that freedom of speech is being threatened are only concerned with extending freedom of speech to those protecting racism, sexism and bigotry, from those who fight against it.

The real debate is that between the assertion of the status quo and their individual rights over the collective rights of those traditionally barred from power.

It is not enough for the unempowered to challenge specific incidents of bigotry and racism: The ideas that underline these concepts must be exposed and challenged as well.

To challenge these ideas, equity and affirmative action programs and discriminatory harassment policies must be defended. These programs are required because universities and other status quo institutions have traditionally discriminated against women and minorities. Discriminatory harassment policies and affirmative action programs are necessary because admissions, hiring, promotions and, yes, even curriculum decisions, should not be left solely in the hands of those who are responsible for discrimination in the first place.

Brenda Barnes



LETTERS

The *Dalhousie Gazette* welcomes letters to the editor. Letters should not exceed 300 words in length and should be typed and double-spaced. The deadline for letters is Monday noon before publication. Letters may be submitted on Mac or IBM-compatible 3.5" disk.

Baskets 'o brain food

To the editor:

Perhaps the concept of the gift baskets at Christmas exam time is a good fund-raising idea, but I would like to voice some concerns.

The idea may be appropriate for first year students and some undergraduates, but not necessarily for all students. As a returning 36 year old student, I was somewhat perturbed that my 80 year old mother received a notice requesting a donation.

I understand the request was made with the explanation that students do not always eat well prior to exams, and that the proceeds would go towards fund-raising efforts for student exchanges to developing communities overseas. The gift basket that I received contained a bag of popped pop-

corn, bubblegum, a chocolate bar, 2 or 3 granola bars, a candy cane, an orange, a small bottle of spring water, some tea bags, an individual juice carton, and a pencil. Thank goodness I eat better year round than this. It seems to me that you may be procuring proceeds on donors false assumptions that they are providing nutritious snacks for the student. Brain food can be healthy and fun. Dried fruits and nuts, multi-grain crackers, canned fish, etc. (and 1 or 2 treats) would be more appropriate.

As well, if possible, how about using sponsors who have minimal unnecessary extra packaging? That would be mentally and ecologically uplifting!

I commend the President's Leadership Class on its enthusiasm, but urge that extra thought be given. We need leaders to act with congruent values and initiative in our society today.

Denise Marion

Tangled TVs

To the editor:

Attention students: Don't touch that dial. It's bad enough that your school and your government are sucking as much money out of you as they possibly can but wait until you catch the drift of the "student package" from Granada.

One day I innocently considered enquiring how much it would cost to rent a VCR. Limited by the size of Halifax, I was drawn to the large, commercial appeal of Granada, King/Queen of the Rent-to-own.

I was graciously greeted by a friendly salesperson who was quick to give me

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