

Comment is an opinion column open to members of the University community who wish to present an informed opinion on a topic of their selection.

Picking up those

Pogey cheque blues

by Cheryl Downton

In these times of unstable insanity, also known as the present economic picture, a majority of those Canadians who are out of work would recognize such magnanimous statements as: "working with you between jobs" and "working with people who want to work" as dictums from Employment and Immigration Canada, also known as the Unemployment Insurance Commission. Not only are these slogans a slap in the face for any U.I. recipient, but an insult to anyone who knows anything about the job market and can employ even a small measure of realistic theory.

The time has come to re-examine the entire Unemployment Insurance Commission strategy, especially as it relates to, and affects, the U.I. recipient: Is the Commission really 'working' with unemployed Canadians, or is it indeed 'working' against them. There have been changes over the last twelve months which indicate a stronger case for the latter view.

Even a cursory look at public advertising, both in the visual and printed media, supports this conclusion. Publicity aimed at intimidation: "we know about you cheaters, and we're going to get you" does little to endear U.I. recipients to the employed whose pay deductions support the UI programme. Campaigns like the 'Report on Hirings' again serve the useful purpose of creating an atmosphere of suspicion and mistrust. These strategies can only reinforce the already prominent belief that those receiving unemployment insurance benefits are ripping off the average hardworking



Dal Photo/Posiak

wage earner, and do wonders for the feelings of self respect and self worth of U.I. recipients.

As if this, combined with stricter legislation which makes it more difficult to obtain U.I. benefits, is not enough suffering for any one body of people, the commission's handling of the nationwide postal strike inflicts more injustice. All Canadians are affected by the stoppage of mail service, but none so keenly as the receiver of unemployment insurance benefits. As U.I. recipients are well aware, all benefit cheques and correspondence concerning same are channelled through the regional Moncton offices of Employment and Immigration Canada. Local Unemployment Insurance Commission outlets do not

handle 'cash flow' matters. Due to the interruption in postal service, alternate arrangements have been made necessary; arrangements designed and implemented, it would seem, to further inconvenience and dishearten. Once again the government has come up with a scheme to hamper those who have already been dealt a more than fair share of hardship.

Using its unfailing insight, the government has created a situation, supposedly designed to alleviate a problem, which has instead created more problems and placed more stresses, both financial and emotional, on those who have already been handed the maximum length in shitty ends of sticks. It is interesting to note that three days before what had been forecast as a

postal strike of uncertain duration, at least one local Commission office, using aforementioned insight, advised benefit recipients to proceed as usual, and mail report cards—an interesting use of words—on Friday evening. It is not difficult to surmise what happened to the cards of those people who followed this advice . . . the cards are even now in a mailbag, somewhere, gathering dust.

For those who acted upon their own initiative (perhaps employing an unadvocated insight) and mailed their cards early, a cheque may or may not be awaiting them at the interim Halifax depot. Those fortunate enough to have beaten the mail strike can proceed to the Halifax Armouries—that characterless

tomb of a building—where shivering U.I.C. employees wait to act upon a request for a cheque while awaiting the onset of pneumonia. Again, if you are one of the fortunates, you may receive your benefit cheque, having lost only a few days reward. Incidentally, the only way to discover if a cheque is moldering in the Armouries' dampness, is to stand in line and wait your turn: there is no master list, and no telephone service.

If, however, you are one of the many whose cards never reached the hallowed and relative nirvanic safety of Moncton, you must proceed to the local U.I.C. office, make out duplicate cards, and wait while the trip is made back and forth to Moncton, before receiving the long awaited envelope which may or may not contain something cashable.

As one visit to the Armouries is never enough to satisfy the U.I. recipient's need for despairing dampness, one must return to deposit the report cards for the next cheque at the week's end. The following week one must return again for the (hopefully) resulting cheque. Things will continue in this wonderfully convenient and productive manner until mail service returns to the pre-strike level of efficiency.

As one of the developing pneumonia cases at the depot pointed out, there is compensation for all injustices—the sign over the box designated to receive the report cards headed for Moncton via a hired courier service, tells us we do not need to place a fourteen cent postage stamp on the envelope.

Letters

I'm honest, honest!

To the Gazette:

I wish to respond to the article "President Admits Nixonian Antics". While the student press at Dalhousie may have a watchdog role in reporting on the Council and Executive I believe this article constitutes an attack on my personal honesty and integrity. Some of the Gazette's readership may be led to believe that I used Council funds for private use or that I used presidential influence to obtain a favourable price in the Student Union print shop.

In the first instance, the only Council funds I have access to are the Executive Fund and the Presidential Expense Account. No funds have been withdrawn from the Executive Fund since August

and my expense account is intact with all its monies unspent. This can be verified by checking the Student Union's books which any Dalhousie student is entitled to do.

The second point concerning my "influence" in the print shop needs clarification. When I went to the print shop on October 17 the manager, Wayne Cross, was not there. I had been told that the correct price for the work I wanted to order was 1-3/4c per sheet. Since Wayne was the only one who could operate the printing press, I left the "note". Later that evening, Marc Allain called and asked if I was aware of the fact that I had asked for lower prices. I simply replied "no". The next day when I returned for the leaflets Wayne told me that the price I had been given was for business size paper, not the legal size needed. When told of the corrected cost, I made arrangements for payment of that price. This fact was not brought out in the Gazette article.

Moo! Moo! Moo!

by John Hawkins

Last week, Major Vending followed Beaver Foods' earlier move to raise the price of the 8 oz. serving of milk to 30c. Since the wholesale price of milk has not changed recently, there seems to be no justification for the increase in price, other than to directly add to the profits of these operations.

The wholesale price of the 8 oz. container of milk (set by the N.S. Department of Agriculture) is 16-2/3c. This means that Major Vending and

Beaver Foods now have a mark-up of 80%, or in money terms, they make 13-1/3c on each 1/2 pint of milk they sell, all at the expense of health conscious Dalhousie students.

It is presently cheaper to purchase coffee or a glass of coke than a container of milk in the S.U.B. cafeteria. The dental students at Dalhousie are probably the only ones on campus, besides our eager food specialists, who will be happy with the price hike.

I have been criticized by many for taking an active role in an anti-A.F.S. campaign and to be honest there is some validity in these arguments. Mike Power (the person) often wants to get actively involved in questions that Mike Power (the President) should not, for a variety of reasons. As to denying involvement in an anti-A.F.S. campaign, I think anyone who

knows me knows my position on the question. Over the summer I came to realize that A.F.S. could do little for Dalhousie students and this point may be partially indicated by the fact that five (5) student unions withdrew from A.F.S. in the last month, the organization is moribund and will formally disband on No-

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