

ED/OP

Join the March, women

This Friday (September 20) marks the annual Take Back the Night March. Halifax women and children will join protesters nationally and internationally in a demonstration opposing violence against women.

As a women-only march, we use this opportunity to claim our right to safely walk in the streets and

to protest the oppression we, as a group, face everyday. Men who wish to support this effort can also play a role by offering to baby-sit so their women friends with children can go on the March, or by simply cheering us on along the way.

Increased awareness of domestic and street violence against women contributed to a mass demonstration in Halifax last year, but recent events show that even more support is needed.

With the Supreme Court's decision to strike down part of the so-called 'rape shield' law women are once again threatened with being put on trial if we pursue sexual assault complaints.

The Nova Scotia government's decision to appeal the ruling in the Morgentaler case threatens women's access to safe abortions in Nova Scotia and demonstrates the provincial government's insensitivity to our needs.

Rumours are already circulating about recent rapes on Saint Mary's and King's College campuses, and yet women students haven't been officially informed about these events. Don't we have a right to learn about these things so we can take action to protect ourselves?

A woman attending Mount Saint Vincent University narrowly escaped physical injury when an armed man attacked her last Sunday. The emotional damage of his attack will stay with her for years to come, if

not forever.

Local universities have recently hosted the group Doug and the Slugs, to play during orientation week activities. Reports in *The Picaro* reaffirm this group is well known for its "ill-mannered commentary of crudities" regarding nuns, mothers

andsisters. To top it off, one band member saw fit to drop his pants in

front of the (female) *Picaro* photographer after the show. This offensive act left her "shaken and upset".

For many women the potential of being raped, assaulted, or verbally or physically abused is enough to create a climate of fear. Rejecting this climate is what the Take Back the Night March is all about.

We can also use the March to celebrate the advances women are making and the recognition that is given to our concerns. On a local level, Dalhousie University is establishing a committee to address personal security issues on campus; the Dalhousie Student Union, with Dal Security, is offering a women's self defence course and instituting a campus patrol and walk-home service. It is unfortunate that any of these services are needed, but until we change the climate at least we can work to protect ourselves.

Taking part in the March is also an empowering experience which gives many women strength to fight oppression, be it in their homes, work or school. It is also a lot of fun to be out with your women friends and singing in the streets.

Stopping violence against women is part of a larger movement towards our becoming full and equal participants in society. The Take Back the Night March is one way women can contribute to this movement.

For March details see p. 19.

Lara Morris

OPINION

OPINION

Teaching assistants get no respect

What would happen if Dalhousie University had no Teaching Assistants? Enrolment is increasing constantly yet the number of faculty is decreasing. How can quality education be maintained? By employing teaching assistants to mark your papers, tests and exams, lead your tutorials and labs.

Teaching Assistants are, with few exceptions, graduate students. Some are striving for a Masters degree while others are completing their doctoral studies. Teaching Assistants are valuable members of the university community yet, to look at our experience in comparison with other universities offering graduate degrees, you would think that Dalhousie could function quite well without us.

Did you know that teaching assistants at Dal are the lowest paid in the country?

For instance, did you know that teaching assistants at Dalhousie are the lowest paid in Canada? While rates of pay vary from department to department, on average a T.A. can expect less than \$6 or \$7 per hour based on a ten hour work week.

A teaching assistant at an Ontario university can expect to earn no less than \$20 an hour based on a ten hour work week. In Alberta,

teaching assistants at the lowest end of the pay scale can expect no less than \$3500 per term. At the University of Manitoba a teaching assistant earns almost \$15 per hour based on the number of hours actually worked. Why does Dalhousie believe their Teaching Assistants deserve less?

While it's true that all universities are under financial strain in the province of Nova Scotia, money appears to exist for new buildings, hundreds of thousands of dollars are lying dormant that are reserved for scholarships whose criteria are long out of date or designated for programs no longer offered at Dalhousie.

And rates of pay are not the only issue T.A.'s would like to see addressed. A lack of standardization makes it extremely difficult to compare a T.A.'s experience from one department to another. No distinction is made between a marker, tutorial leader, lab instructor, etc. Some departments offer training for new teaching assistants, others do not. Some departments include a teaching assistant position as part of the terms of the scholarship, other departments view a teaching position as something completely separate from scholarships. This makes it very difficult to interpret statistics in order to arrive at a reasonable assessment of the situation at Dalhousie.

The Presidents Advisory Council has, over the summer, set up a sub-committee to determine a financial support policy for graduate students. So far this committee has had one meeting but we hope that some of the problems with teaching assistants can be addressed, or

at the very least recognized.

The Office for Instructional Development set up workshops last year for teaching assistants. Unfortunately, more problems came to the surface than could possibly be solved through that forum. It is hoped that the University will stop thinking that a teaching assistant position is something "extra" on top of scholarships, or part of a scholarship. For all those graduate students not receiving a scholarship, a T.A. is most likely their only source of funding.

The Dalhousie Association of Graduate Students is seeking to solve some of these problems and has formed a special committee to examine the issues surrounding teaching assistants. So far we are shocked to see just how little we are paid compared to our colleagues outside the province; shocked at the lack of a common structure existing at Dalhousie for teaching assistants; and, shocked at the disregard we believe Dalhousie's administration has shown to a problem that for years has gone unaddressed.

Jennifer Kressner
President, Dalhousie Association of
Graduate Students

LETTERS CONTINUED

putting science persuasion, I quickly noted only one class in that subject. I had already taken this class last year, foolishly wanting it only because it was an evening class. I had received an A for the course, and I could retake it, try to improve my grade, but that would involve filling out "re-take previously passed course" forms at the Registrar's Office - too much effort. (Sorry, Prof. Moriarity. The course was interesting, though.)

Anyway, in the words of another co-op student working this fall, the only evening classes offered were "Women Studies: 15th century women" and "Intro to French." Je parle francais bien tres, and women of the 1400's don't particularly in-

terest me.

Of course, there are more courses offered than that. But my point is this: the majority of courses are either first year introductory, third or fourth year advanced (with tons of pre-requisites), or grad classes. Not even basket weaving 1100R.

Finally, I chose Psychology 1000R. And... (wait for it)... it's full. Fine. I tell them, I'll get on the waiting list. Then the first day of class. One hundred-and-eighty students. Registered, that is. Thirty more on the waiting list. The first people will get in. Second day: start worrying. Prepare for your Plan B.

My Plan B? Pray for next summer's available classes.

Craig R. Falkenham

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