

# Dean proposes reforms in Arts and Science

By MAUREEN PHINNEY

Changes have been proposed for Dalhousie's largest undergraduate faculty. At a recent Faculty Meeting, Dean James, Dean of Arts and Science, described a set of reforms that would change the structure of undergraduate education in that faculty.

In his brief, Dean James outlined the reforms and their purpose. Essentially the changes are designed to give individual departments more freedom to make up "a rational and economic course of training in their respective fields for those students who elect to specialize in these fields"; to give students more time and freedom to choose their field of specialization; to give Faculty members freedom to offer new courses and teaching methods; to reform the examination system, and the university admissions system.

These are the proposed changes: (1) that departments which wish to retain their present curriculum do so, provided they set up entrance examinations into their courses, and that they provide students with exact information on course content and on what they must know before entering a course. (2) that a college be established within Dalhousie-King's whose curriculum is less restrictive in content, form, and course duration than the conventional one. This curriculum would be open to all students. (3) That departments which wish to do so offer third year students an integrated full-time program in their discipline for the entire academic year. (4) that students be provided in published form with detailed information on content of individual classes and seminars offered in the university and college, as well as an exact description of what they must know before enrolling in a particular class or seminar. (5) that admission to a class be by examination. These entrance examinations would take the place of the examinations which are now given at the end of first and second year classes, they would be concerned with determining whether the students were conversant with ideas regarded by the professor as essential to understanding the lines of argument he wished to develop in class.

The brief explains the reasons for the experimental college which will provide supposedly "liberal education" at Kings; to provide students with "an opportunity to learn how to choose, to understand the forces which influence their choices, and to foresee the consequences of these choices."

The system will promote diversity, interaction between students, individual faculty members, and departments. The brief continues "I see the college as a system in which students can be provided with

the information necessary to make choices, then given an opportunity to test out these choices under conditions where the consequences of their choices are reversible, and finally presented with an irrevocable choice (of field of specialization) at the end of the second year."

The college academic program of the college would be controlled by an elected Council, made up of faculty members who have taught in the college, and students who, having attended classes in the college, are now taking their specialist training in their third or fourth years. The chairman of the

Council would be appointed by the University of Kings College and be made an associate dean. Faculty members of both the university and the college would be the same.

Would all first and second year Arts and Science undergraduates at Dal be able to attend this college? Apparently not. The brief concludes: "It may be necessary to restrict the number of students admitted to the college, if the ideas I have outlined above prove to be too popular with the students, or if they prove to be somewhat unpopular with the Faculty."

## Gazette Interview

### With Dr. James on Faculty Changes

By MAUREEN PHINNEY

Q. What part will students play in developing the reforms outlined in your brief?

DR. JAMES: It's my hope that they'll play a major role. It's clear from the brief that my ideas on education are somewhat untraditional, and involve student participation in the new program. I think that the role which a student plays is related to the amount of experience he's had in the program.

There's a certain difficulty that one can imagine if one goes to another context: I don't want you to take this analogy too far, but if you went into a concentration camp and asked someone to invent a democracy, they might have some difficulty in doing that. There is a very real sense that students at the moment do things to avoid doing other things. The kind of participation of students who have already tried, rather than that of people who can be regarded as escaping from what they regard as a rather repetitive system at the moment. . .

Q. Has King's been approached for assuming the part of college of Dalhousie?

DR. JAMES: King's hasn't been approached. I don't want this brief to acquire either the status of an official report or something that is already settled upon, because we're a long, long way from being agreed.

Q. What if King's refused to become the college of Dalhousie?

DR. JAMES: The fundamental ideas of my proposals do not depend on even the existence of King's, let alone upon its co-operation. It would be nice if we could persuade King's to co-operate but that is a separate issue. You could have this more liberal education program in Dalhousie University quite easily.

Q. The professors at both the university and the college would be the same ones. How can the new college be expected to change their approach to teaching? Will classes there be conducted in any different manner?

DR. JAMES: At present, professors are limited to teaching 55 minute classes twice or three times a week. Classes are conducted in a lecture hall with the professor standing at the front and 500 students do no more than take down what the great god says. With the less formalized structure within the college, professors and students will be more able to tailor to a greater degree than at present, administrative arrangements to suit the particular subject matter of a class or seminar.

Q. How would third year immersion in your chosen field at the college affect the master's program? Would it only last a year?

DR. JAMES: No, It would not cut down to one year. My argument in general is that it takes the equivalent of a year to train somebody in a major in the present Arts program. You've got five classes, six classes in the usual major. Five classes is the equivalent of one year's work. Instead of suggesting that we organize it vertically, I'm suggesting that we organize it horizontally. At least we consider the possibility of doing so. As it is stated, it would have no impact on the master's program.

Q. How is the faculty reacting to this proposal?

DR. JAMES: That I can't say. I know that some people are very enthusiastic. The question in my mind is not how they react to this proposal; as a result of putting it before the Faculty, we can come up with some proposal that will train students to live in the 1970's more adequately than perhaps they're able at the moment.

Q. What if the Student Council rejects these proposals?

DR. JAMES: I think this depends entirely on degree of rationality of the arguments they can muster. I have to emphasize that I am not wedded to this particular proposal. If it turns out to be the case that students can't either put up an alternative proposal, which takes into account the fact that we live in a real world, and by that I mean that a man, in order to survive, generally speaking, has to have some kind of specialist knowledge, and in order to obtain the necessary money through college, the college has to certify that person as being an expert in that particular field. If the students can come up with an idea that takes into consideration these facts of the real world, but at the same time gives the students in the program an opportunity to find out what sort of people they want to be, find out what sort of things they want to do is a relatively long term prospect. If students can think of some idea that satisfied their requirements then that's great. If on the other hand I am greeted with what appears to be an emotional response, I'll respond to that in the same way I usually respond to emotional responses; I'll ask the person concerned to talk to me as a rational human being or go somewhere else.

Q. When will the new changes be finalized?

DR. JAMES: That is up in the air. The sooner the better. I think that this would be a bold experiment. If it comes off, in my view, we would be the most exciting university in Canada, but on the other hand we also have to do it well. And although some people would like to see us start next year, I think that's being unrealistic.

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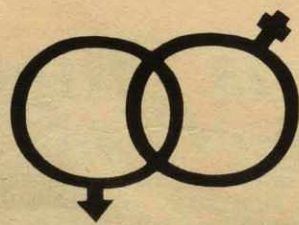
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