

Post-strike problems persist

# The quality of education is strain'd

"Building a better university." That was the slogan promoted by the Dalhousie Faculty Association (DFA) during last month's strike. And throughout the labour negotiations, the faculty stressed that their main concern lay in maintaining Dalhousie's academic standards. Yet, two weeks later, there is reason to doubt that all members of the faculty had such philanthropic motives.

"Jane" is a student in a first-year, half-credit geology course. Her class meets one evening a week for three hours. There is no text for the course; it is completely dependent on the lectures given by her professor. Jane had had seven classes before the strike; then three were cancelled due to the work stoppage, including the

class scheduled for the midterm. By the time the strike was resolved, there were only two classes left, so the professor cancelled the exam.

Jane has not been evaluated, but she is going to get credit for the course anyway. Her professor has promised a blanket mark, one that "they will all be happy with". According to Jane, the professor told the class that the Senate hadn't given him any money to extend the course, so he wasn't prepared to do so.

Jane's story may or may not be unique. Many faculty members are being very cooperative about making up classes, even at their own expense. However, Jane's situation does point to a flaw in the current system. The administration's policy of leaving the

individual department head or professor to work out his or her own way of making up missed work does not always result in a fair and equitable solution for students.

Jane, like many Dalhousie students, has been cheated. The material she missed during the strike is not going to be made up. After Christmas, when Jane starts the second part of the course, she will likely find that much of the prerequisite material has been passed over.

How is it that this situation is allowed to exist? Denis Stairs, Vice-President (Academic and Research), said he was not aware of the situation in question. He quoted the policy adopted by the Dalhousie Senate last week which established a committee to pro-

cess applications for additional funding to extend classes. However, he pointed out that "the idea is not to pay everybody". Criteria must be established and applications processed systematically. And, he stressed, "these things take time".

Indeed they do. But the time has run out on Jane. Her class finished on Monday night. To schedule a last-minute exam now would only aggravate an already grossly unfair situation.

The most disturbing thing about this situation is the attitude of Jane's professor. By refusing to teach unless he is specifically paid for his time, he is discrediting the stated goals of the strike. One can only assume that money, rather than the quality of education at Dalhousie, is his chief con-

cern. A professor who assigns a blanket mark can hardly be regarded as greatly concerned with academic standards.

Not only does this professor's attitude discredit the DFA, it is also an insult to his students. It presupposes that their only concern is their mark. He should be reminded that students have paid a great deal to come to university, not simply to receive a grade, but primarily to receive an education.

One can only hope that Jane's is an isolated case. It seems terribly unfair that students, who, in vast numbers, supported the DFA with rallies and demonstrations against the administration, should be treated so insensitively. Isn't it time for the faculty to support the students?

Lyssa McKee

## Letters

### The principle of the thing

To the editors:

During this time, when both students and faculty struggle to get the university back to normal, there is one group whom none of us should overlook: those members of the Bargaining Unit who chose to continue to hold classes during the strike.

Faculty who took collective action owe our non-conforming colleagues a debt of thanks because they held up a mirror to us, and we were able to assure ourselves that we are indeed

democratic. Had our action been unanimous, we might never have known that we could pass the test of democracy, namely, effective respect for minority dissent. Their action tended to undermine the efficacy of our action and to prolong the disruption. As has been clear since the strike, they also sowed confusion among students. (We agree with Heather Hueston's editorial of December 1: all classes should have been cancelled.) They have thereby provoked a justifiable anger among us, but we showed them respect and forbearance.

Besides the good light they have thrown on us, we should also admire them for their own high-minded principles. Their high-mindedness is shown primarily in their disregard for the public consequences of their

action. In this they have been true to the highest tradition of academics.

What could be an appropriate gesture? It has been argued that one of the hallmarks of a good society is that it provides its members with institutional vehicles with which to express their altruism. Certainly our dissenting members have shown altruism. They have often proclaimed that their primary duty is continuing to teach, they declared themselves willing to soldier on, compensated only by what the Board offered before the strike. (The Board had never made that offer clear, but it was about a 0.9% cost of living increase). To afford an institutional expression of their altruism, we urge the DFA or the administration to set up a scholarship fund, into which our

noble colleagues can put the difference between the settlement we have won and what they were willing to work for. This would amount to 2.8% of their salary for the rest of their careers — a piddling sum to pay for principle.

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Herbert V. Gamberg, Sociology and Social Anthropology  
Ruth Gamberg, Education  
Toni A. Laidlaw, Education  
Om Kamra, Biology  
Leonard Kasdan, Sociology and Social Anthropology  
Barbara Anne Keddy, Nursing  
Alan Kennedy, English  
Patrick Kerans, Social Work  
John M. Kirk, Spanish  
R.E. Klapstein, Business Administration  
Robert M. Martin, Philosophy  
Franco Medioli, Geology  
David R. Overton, Theatre  
U.L. Gouranga Rao, Economics  
Peter K. Schotch, Philosophy  
Michael Shepherd, Mathematics, Statistics and Computing Science  
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that my professor in the Spanish Department was asked, in a note he received from the Office of the President of Dalhousie, to summarize the material missed in a one and one half hour period. Obviously material that requires two and a half weeks to learn cannot be rushed over in one and one half hours if it is to be properly covered. I find even the suggestion offensive, to my professor, my classmates, and myself. Obviously someone who does not think it necessary that ample time be spent on material in class is not looking to that better interests of the students, and it is unfortunate that this someone is the president of our university.

The fact that the faculty have been refused payment to make up lost class time is just the frosting on a bitter cake after the appalling way they were treated during the strike. Having their mail cut off and not being allowed inside university buildings to use the washrooms are only a couple of the many disgraceful things these people had to put up with. I found the behaviour of the administration during the strike to be very like that of misbehaved, jealous school children, and I must add that any respect I may have had for this administration, I now know to be totally undeserved.

Finally, Dalhousie University is bound by a legal contract to me. I paid money on the understanding that I would receive a certain number of hours of instruction, some of which were missed due to the strike. If the professors will not be paid to make up that time, the money should come back to me. Dalhousie owes me thirty dollars, and if I do not receive that money or if I am not informed of a specific date on which may expect to receive realize thirty dollars is not a large amount — it should be obvious that it is the principle of the matter that concerns me.

I await your response.

Heidi Peterson

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## Pay up

The following is an open letter to President Clark.

Dear President Clark,

I am a fulltime student at the University of King's College, and parttime student at Dalhousie. As you are well aware, I recently missed two and a half weeks of classes due to the legal strike put on by the Dalhousie Faculty Association. Since classes have resumed, I have been informed that professors will not be paid to make up the hours of those lost classes. In fact I have been told