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our supply of letters is steadily dwindling, but our supply of original cartoons is thankfully still plentiful. the letters today include advice to council and a look at the big, clumsy feet on campus. in our never-ending effort to print timely interesting features, and to fill the space in the paper, we also include a piece on examinations. what with exam week rapidly approaching, we thought a cursory glance would be quite appropriate.



Halloween Apples?? ⊕

## Are examinations really worthwhile?

By ROD PHILLIPS

Reprinted from Lakehead Argus

Presumably most of the readers of this article are at university. In which case, most of the readers will have written many examinations already in their lives. But how many have ever thought seriously about these examinations—their purpose, their relation to education, their achievements, and so on? Probably very few. But the examination system is becoming extremely outmoded and in need of critical scrutiny.

The following is an attempt at briefly analyzing certain aspects of the examination system.

First of all, how important are examinations to students. Briefly, the answer is that the results of examinations determine whether or not a student is credited with his "year." The degree of influence of examinations varies from one department—and even within departments—and from one year, to another. For example, in first-year history the breakdown of the final mark is 20% to 40% term work (which includes the mid-year examination), and 60% to 80% final examination. The variation is according to individual tutors. But in senior years' history, the final examination accounts for less of the final mark, and there is generally no mid-year examination.

### Some Variation

As you can see, there is some variation in the degrees of influence of examinations, but the fact remains that examinations do account for a great deal of the final mark—in many cases, in first-year especially, most of the final mark.

You can see from this brief survey—as if you didn't know it anyway—that examinations play an extremely important role in determining whether or not you graduate. And, generally speaking, we accept this. Only at examination times do we complain that too much emphasis is placed on examinations

and not enough on term work (especially if we have done well during the term). By then, of course, it is far too late, and we forget about it until the next year.

But should examinations be considered so important? What do they really prove?

Firstly, look at the purpose of an examination. Ideally, an examination shows how much a student has learned during the year—how much he has assimilated from the lectures given in his course. Ideally,

But what—in reality this time—does an examination do? Students reading this know damn well that an examination does not test what they have learned during the year. On the contrary, it tests the knowledge they have managed to cram into their heads in the couple of weeks before the examination takes place.

### Keep It

Now, if examiners are satisfied with this arrangement, fine—let's keep the examination system. And let's cut down the academic year from seven months to three weeks. This way, we should be able to get a B.A. or B.Sc. in just over two months of concentrated effort. Ridiculous? Maybe.

But the present examination system does more than just test a couple of week's work. It tests, among other things, a student's writing speed and his ability to work under stress. Of course, this doesn't help students who are verbally slower and less fluent, and it can be disastrous to students who are unable to remain calm and collected under stress, but it's always been this way, so why change it?

Yes, it's difficult to see any resemblance between the examination system's ideals on the one hand, and achievements on the other. It is quite obvious that this situation is intolerable and must be changed. Easy to say. Difficult to find a practical alternative. More difficult to implement the alternative.

There are a number of alternatives open for the present examination system. Which of these alternatives or what combination of them should be instituted is open to debate. The most popular of the alternatives are:

### Alternatives

—"Open book" examinations. Where students are allowed to refer to prescribed texts or to any books they wish.

—Distribution of examination questions some days before the examination itself takes place.

—Exclusive reliance on other criteria for the final mark e.g. research papers, term work, seminars, etc.

It is necessary to note that every one of these proposals demands somewhat different abilities. "Open book" examinations, for instance, call for more comprehension and less memorization, and create less tension.

Of course, the alternatives also depart from the ideal of the examination system. Their results do not evidence knowledge gained by memorization, but by understanding and research. This aspect is of minor importance however; the ideal of the examination is by no means set down by law, and may be discarded when considered obsolete. At this point, it may not be irrelevant to ask where, in post-graduate life, one is required to work under examination conditions. One is always able to refer to available information.

The ramifications of changing the examination system will (a note of optimism) be far-reaching. The structure of the whole teaching system is based on examinations, and abolition of the latter will necessitate modification of the former. Nevertheless, the examination system is badly in need of re-appraisal and replacement, and these should be effected as soon as possible. The present intolerable situation must not be perpetuated.

## letters

### campus greenery

I see that another learned panel has judged Western Canadian students apathetic and non-creative. What utter rot! One has only to view the quad from a third floor window of the administration building to be assailed by a striking panorama of student creativity. Notice the intricate pattern of brown paths which are being quickly stamped upon the dull sameness of nature's greenery. The symmetrical and geometrical precision of these paths is amazing. And consider, all this has been accomplished in one short month. The mind boggles at the thought of the intricate mosaic which will have been created by spring!

Come, let imagination take flight. Visualize the scene come April: mysterious swamps; oozing quick-sand pools; turbid, muddy rivers! If the zoological people will get on the ball and introduce some exotic fauna, we will have a tourist attraction equal to the Florida Everglades.

Persevere, fellow students! Keep up the good fight! (Walk?) Save your poor, tired bodies those extra few steps and conserve those four seconds of your valuable time. Help prove that we are indeed mature enough to aid in fulfilling the American dream of a continent covered with concrete.

Stamp out that grass!

Art Smyth  
ed 3

### original thought

There were two main reasons for the student council's withdrawal from CUS. The first, and most important, was to save \$10,000 per year of students' union funds. The second was the revulsion last year's executive had toward the activist tendencies of the national union.

"Of what interest," they asked themselves, "are peace, drugs, controversial speakers and birth control to students?" Being experts on all campus viewpoints, they also answered themselves, "None." They seceded and asked the campus to vote on the action knowing full well that the ordinary voter can easily be bullied into letting things rest.

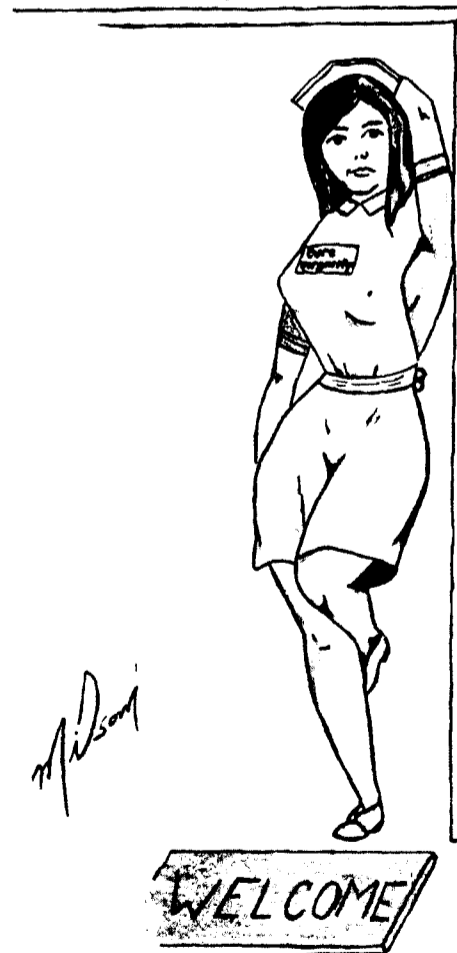
It is my opinion that all of the thoughtful students of Canadian campuses are concerned with international relations and are proud of Canada's stature in international diplomacy. These are the students who will become the philosophical leaders of Canada and it is a shame they have lost one of their voices now. We have withdrawn our support, indicating disapproval. What will the International Union of Students, and the International Congress for Students think?

I would like to caution students' council by quoting Bob Dylan, "Don't stand in the doorway, don't block up the hall—For the times, they are a-changing." I would also like to issue them a challenge. Don't concentrate on developing good business technique and entertainment, these are perfected sciences. Delve into that vast and unexplored field of human and international relations. Who knows, you may come up with an original thought.

Stan Wolanski

Full-blooded  
students wanted  
at Bleed-in  
142 SWB

BLOOD DONER  
CLINIC



WE LIKE  
SUB

LOVE that  
GOLDEN BEAR  
MARCHING  
BAND

"COME IN ..... AND GIVE"