

Rats, mazes and dolts, Clark's comments on Dalhousie

BY LYNN DECKER

Dr. James Clark retired last year from Dalhousie's Psychology department at age 65. He was hired by Dalhousie straight out of graduate school in 1959. Due to his popularity with the students, Clark has returned this year to teach his History of Psychology class. The textbook he created for the course is also used in classes at Harvard.

Clark has received Dalhousie's Alumni Teaching Award. He is also one of those rare professors who makes a lasting impression on their students.

Gazette: Have you done any interesting research in the past?

Clark: I would characterize my research career as undistinguished. For almost a decade I did research with rats and mazes. I once made the mistake of going home at summer and telling my mother all about it... As I told her about this ever-exciting research I was doing, I saw my dear mother fall asleep.

Do you have a specific teaching style?

I would hope that to all classes I would try to bring a certain informality... Formality can be brought in books; formality can be brought on tape; formality can be brought in other forms... It is the fallible human being who, it seems to me, is perhaps capable of bringing to students something they don't get in other ways — something they don't get over television. The only reason I would ever willingly go to attend a lecture on anything is with the expectation that the lecturer would make a fool out of himself... I have tried to leave myself open, I suppose, to making a fool of myself.

What are the best and the worst things about Dalhousie?

Dalhousie I think has proved, on the whole, very tolerant of my eccentricities; which I think would not have always been as well received elsewhere. They gave me a great degree of freedom to do what I wished... Maybe that aspect of a certain tolerance, of various kinds of eccentricity, does affect the way Dalhousie is received by students. I would like to think so.

What is worst about Dalhousie? What is worst in my mind about Dalhousie, [which is] shared very commonly by other universities, is the condition under which we teach... Over the 40 years that I have taught here... large classes have advanced from the first-year level... I have been here long enough to see second-year classes become large, third-year classes become large... I blame Dalhousie for that. It is not particular to Dalhousie... I suppose one can say it is imposed upon all of us. I don't know, but it's made, in some ways, a mockery of university education.

Do you feel you get paid enough?

[laughs] I wonder if I can tell you the truth about this. I do. I would not want my reply generalized to others. There are professors at Dalhousie who have large families, there are professors at Dalhousie who I dare say have expensive tastes, and those professors are not paid enough I bet you.

How has Dalhousie changed since you've been here?

It changed from a small college to a big University. In sheer numbers Dalhousie had started to expand when I arrived. For example, the Psychology

department that I joined was a department of three people. I made the fourth. By the end of the sixties there were going on 25 professors in Psychology. So there was that decade of extraordinary expansion, as students and money flooded into the place.

Biology 1000 is being taught in the Rebecca Cohn to 800 students. The possibility of having Introductory Psychology classes in the McGinnes Room, which would hold 350 students, is being discussed. What do you think about jumbo classes?

I think that I retired just in time for fear that I would otherwise have been asked to teach one of those. The argument can be made that once you reached the sort of standard around here of 150... that once you've gotten that big, it doesn't much matter if you multiply into the hundreds... If I was going to have to spend 50 minutes, 3 times a week, addressing 800 people, I would rehearse.

I would know exactly what my slides would be, I would want them to be as big as possible, as bright as possible and my jokes to have been tested in advance. I would be a performer and we're saturated with performers. When we go home and turn on the television set we see performers that are far better than any of us dolts could possibly be. The great tragedy of postwar education is that we are in the business of doing that.

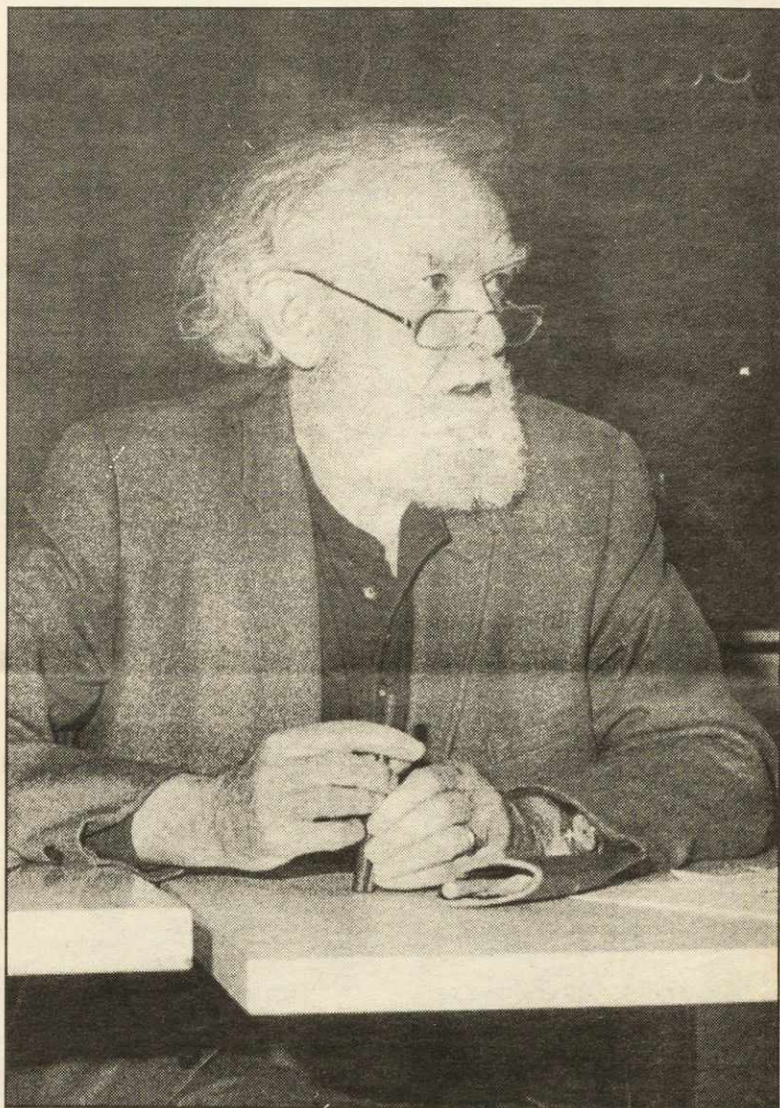
The Canadian Federation of Students released a report called "Strategy for Change". It states that zero tuition can be achieved by implementing a long-term funding formula

paid for by a taxation system on the wealthy. Do you think this is a reasonable goal and, if it is possible, do you think this plan should be implemented?

Can I opt out of the part of that question that supposes that I am an expert on economics? I long ago discovered that on all economic questions, at least beyond the level of barter, that I am incompetent. I just don't know what the economic ramifications of this would be. I wish

very much that all students who are capable of getting something out of a place like Dalhousie could be here if they wish... That is another postwar tragedy of student life which I have seen growing over the decades... students who are running from one damn job to the next including, among those jobs, attending classes... If we could subsidize... it seems to me that of course the answer to any sensible person would be yes, let's do that.

PROFESSOR PROFILE



The ever lucid Dr. Clark speaks to his History of Psychology class. Photo by Ryan Lash

Growing support for corporate involvement in schools

BY CRAIG SAUNDERS

VICTORIA (CUP) — Canadians want more corporate involvement in education but are wary of advertising in school, says a recent survey.

Environics, a Toronto-based polling company, recently released their biannual survey on educational issues. It noted that 90 per cent of Canadians favour more corporate involvement in post-secondary education. Further, it said 75 per cent of Canadians favour more ties between business and secondary and elementary schools.

At the same time, 74 per cent of Canadians oppose advertising in classrooms, while 64 per cent oppose it in hallways and 57 per cent oppose it on computer programs.

"Canadians aren't scared about corporations becoming a

little bit more involved in universities," said Elizabeth Keller, a research associate at Environics. But she added that people prefer involvement to be in job training areas such as co-op positions and internships.

Teachers are not altogether enthused with the results of the survey. "We are opposed to the corporate intrusion into the classroom," said Marc Chevalier, a spokesperson for the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation. "We certainly have some concerns about the corporate agenda inserting itself into the curriculum... Education is one of the areas where public funding is essential," said Chevalier. The federation does not oppose job training in schools, but Chevalier said, it should be within the context of a broad education.

Some academics, however, are much more eager about corporate-educational

partnerships. "The links that do exist between corporations and all levels of education have helped a lot, both business and education," said Norman Wagner, president of the Corporate-Higher Education Forum.

The forum describes itself as an organization of corporate and university chief executives, focusing on issues and opportunities in higher education, and corporate communities.

When Wagner was president of the University of Calgary, the university solicited donations from corporations for a new building on the campus. In recognition of its \$500,000 donation, the facility was named after Esso.

Wagner says the naming of a classroom or a building after a corporation is a legitimate return for a donation, but, he adds that a line must be drawn when it comes to the corporation presence on campus. Wagner pointed out that

"The donor of a classroom never had any say on what was taught."

Wagner said that he is also in agreement with the majority of Canadians on the issue of advertising in schools; he is against it. "By and large, we can't go any farther, or we risk public education in Canada," he said.

Some say it is not so easy to separate an increased general corporate presence in Canadian schools from a growth in advertising in schools.

Bill Bruneau, president of the Canadian Association of University Teachers said that "There is an obvious inconsistency if the public would welcome more business relationships... They will have to take what comes with it, and that's advertising."

Brad Lavigne, chair of the Canadian Federation of Students, says that he is concerned about both the growing corporate presence on campuses and its

subtle and not-so-subtle links to advertising. He cites a number of examples where corporations are both indirectly and directly establishing a greater presence on Canadian campuses.

The University of Montreal, says Lavigne, is looking to sell names of professors. Faculty would get funding from corporations in return for training corporate staff. Atkinson College at York University is looking to sell the names of classrooms to corporations, he adds. And at Carleton University, the Bell Amphitheatre goes so far as to have sponsored chairs.

The situation is reaching the point, says Lavigne facetiously, where "you can sit at the NorTel seat in the Bell Amphitheatre taking Sprint Economics 101 by the GM professor of economics."