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HONOURS IN THE FIRST YEAR.

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At the meeting of the Faculty of Arts of Dec. 2nd 1921 the following resolution of the First Year Advisory Committee was referred to me for the preparation of a report:-

"This Committee recommends that better opportunities be given for the encouragement of Honours students in the first year."

I was instructed to consult other members of the Faculty in the preparation of the report. Among those consulted have been Dr. Eve, Dr.

Harkness, Dr. Hickson & Professor Matthews, to whose experience & knowledge of possible conditions at McGill any practical value there may <sup>be</sup> in this report is ~~due~~ chiefly due. But they would naturally not wish to take responsibility for the proposals I set forth.

The need for some differentiation between students of the first year is apparent from the great inequality of attainments to be found ~~among~~ among them. In the case of History I discovered that whereas the majority of the first year students had no previous knowledge of Greek & Roman history, a small minority had been well grounded in those subjects. The somewhat elementary lectures needed for the first class could, with advantage, have more advanced teaching substituted for them in the case of the second class. The same remark must necessarily apply to other departments in Arts.

It is indeed laid down in the Calendar that advanced courses may in certain cases be given to students of the first year qualified for them (pp. 112-3), & in the case of mathematics this course is to a certain degree adopted. But in the case of the mathematicians it has been found in practice that owing to the large number of subjects taken up by first year students, the extra work required of those taking up Honours in Mathematics causes several quite promising mathematicians to drop out of these Honours classes. In other departments the experiment of advanced courses in the first year does not appear to be the practice, largely no doubt owing to the smallness of the teaching staff, which could not undertake with profit additional courses of lectures, also because the students ~~will~~ already have so many subjects of study in the first year, that intensive work on any one of them would be out of the question. Moreover it must be remembered that the students of no other department except mathematics, desiring to take up honours from the start, have the advantage offered them in their second year of being excused one of the subjects of the curriculum.

Though it is not exactly within the terms of my reference, I have been led by the enquiry I have made & the talks with others, more qualified than I am to express a judgment, to believe that no useful step can be ~~take~~ taken in providing Honours courses for 1st year students unless the curriculum for all 1st year students is lightened, both in their interests & in the interest of getting the best teaching out of the professors & lecturers.

At present 1st year students in Arts have to take up six subjects of instruction in addition to a compulsory course of physical training. From enquiries I have made the average number of lectures & ~~physical~~ physical training periods attended by 1st year students is 26 hours per week, i.e. over 5 hours of the academic day. The result is that very little time can be devoted to private study or thought: **out of a considerable** number of answers to enquiry on that subject I found that only one student did as much as two hours private study a day, while most of them did less than half that amount. The argument I have heard adduced for the present system is that the students come up so ill-educated that if they are to do any work at all it must be by keeping them at it through lectures. But ~~the~~ the object of university education should be to train people to use their thinking faculties for themselves, not to be always pouring somebody else's knowledge into them. As I ~~was~~ overheard one student (a 4th year man).