

# Students plod on, ignore DFA slugfest

Post strike problems persist. That was the title of the Gazette editorial from the final issue last term. We were looking ahead to how exams would work out in January.

Now some students are that finding out after spending some of their Christmas holidays studying.

Those who don't have make-ups are probably trying to put the strike out of their minds, unless they are still waffling over whether to drop a course before the FINAL drop date of January 13.

Even this writer would prefer to write about something else rather than more strike issues. For example, this editorial was to have been about the Canadian University Press conference held over the holidays in Chester, N.S. But who cares about squabbling, self-righteous student journalists except others? (Even though we did slash thousands of dollars, cut positions, save the organization — sort of — and generally schmoozed, lobbied, caucused, partied, — but this editorial isn't about that.)

Looking at the letters below,

it's obvious the feud still simmers among faculty. It's odd to hear them still throw the students' name out in their own snipings back and forth.

The strike is over and does it really matter now who considered the students' interests more? It's best to read the letters and know that we may have a smooth ride for the remainder of the year but the problem is far from resolved.

Just remember ahead of time when the next contract is due to be negotiated two years from now. . .

Heather Hueston



## Letters

### Respect Dissent

To the Editors:

Re: "The Principle of the Thing" (Dec. 8)

The letter signed by some indignant DFA-members is a curious document for several reasons. It aspires to an air of ironic superiority; yet the sarcasm with which the signatories sneer at their non-striking colleagues is so forced and overdone that it results in an abortive rhetoric, which is on par with the insipid punning of the strike-slogan "Building a Better University: Sorry for the Inconvenience." The proposal of the letter is a very quaint one for unionists to make, and is not worth commenting on. But as one who was on strike and is thus not personally affected by this sneering letter I wish to comment on some of its other points.

The signatories congratulate themselves on their forbearance and respect for minority dissent. We must not be deceived by the ironic tone: it is to make their moral complacency a little less obtrusive. But what exactly do they mean when they say they show forbearance and respect for their dissenting colleagues? True, they do not shoot them or beat them up. But otherwise they do every petty thing to them they can do short of breaking the law: they denounce them as scabs; they snub them; and they have already compiled a list of their names, as one of the signatories has confided to me: it does not take much imagination to figure out what the purpose of such a list might be. They must have a rather idiosyncratic notion of tolerance and forbearance.

The motive of non-striking faculty was greed, the indignant signatories charge. Two of them, speaking for the DFA, had stated in local and national radio-shows that higher salaries were the issue of the strike — the bottom line, as

they put it. Thus the motive these DFA members attribute to the non-strikers is the very same motive that made them go on strike. Their indignation is therefore a trifle ridiculous, if not sanctimonious. This is also true of the charge of hypocrisy and of "sowing (ing) confusion among students". The DFA-members who were striking for more money publicly proclaimed they were striking for a better university and thus for the benefit of the students. They succeeded in confusing the students to the point that some of them even joined the picket-line. After the Senate meeting of

In the view of the signatories, there are two villains in the piece, and the DFA is not one of them: the non-striking faculty (because they refused to participate in the disruption) and the administration (because it refused to make the disruption total by a general lock-out). Now mark this well: both are morally condemned for having "prolong(ed) the disruption" by those who have caused this disruption in the first place! Moral philosophy has a term for such innocence, which reasons of tact prevent me from naming.

respect is all the more necessary, as DFA membership is compulsory; and without it we are politically on a very dangerous path.

Rainer Friedrich,  
Professor of Classics

### No cant do

To the Editors:

Personally I can live with the anger of the signatories of the letter of Dec. 8 ("The Principle of the Thing"), but there is an old saying, "principiis obsta" (resist

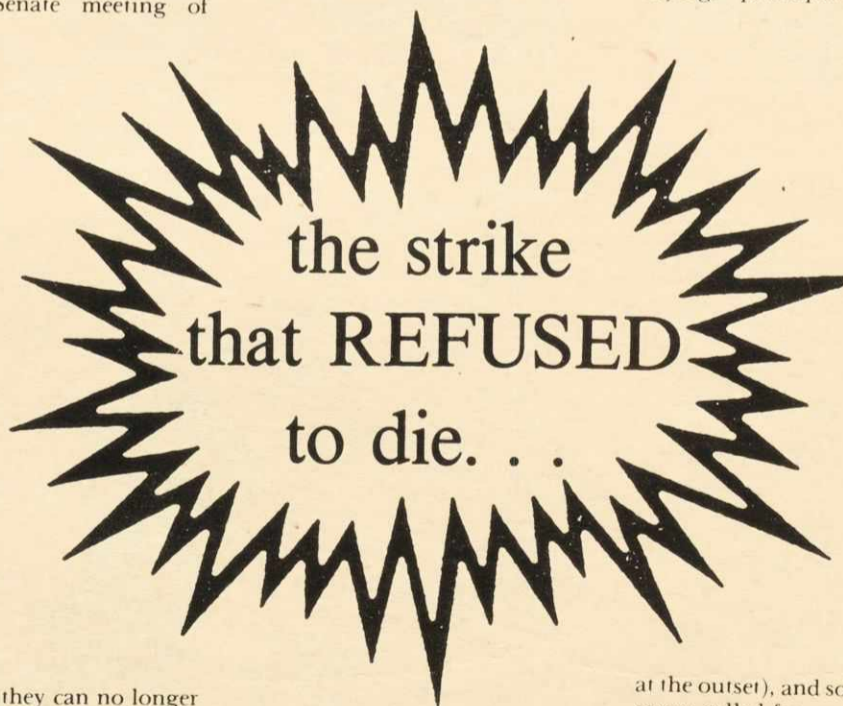
crude Marxist model simply doesn't apply to an institution in which there is so high a degree of faculty self-government as in this one. (In this connection see the article by David Braybrooke in the *Dalhousie News*, Dec. 14). And the recent strike obviously involved a variety of pondered decisions about the university's well-being, both among those who struck and those who didn't.

The signatories sneer at those who went on teaching by choice as being indifferent to "the public consequences of their action." Well, let us wait and see. Obviously those who went on strike had reached various conclusions as to the money available inside the university, and how it should best be spent, and what effects a strike would have on the funding of the university by the Province. But if they were wrong in their reading of the situation, then the gains that have been made with respect to salaries may indeed have public consequences that few could be indifferent to, such as an increasing non-replacement of faculty members who retire or go elsewhere, an increase in class sizes, a reduction of class offerings, a further deterioration of library holdings and services, and so on.

The signatories should not be so quick to assume that they have simply been conferring long-term benefits on their colleagues — or on the student body.

The strike was an impressively large one and received some very favourable publicity. I infer from the signatories' anger that it failed to achieve the financial ends that they sought, and that the intensive bargaining failed to turn up any hidden pot of gold. What bothers me is that I sense now the formation of the myth of a *Strab* in the Back, so that if and when there is a return match, everyone must be compelled by Senate or in some other way to stop teaching, whether they want to or not. The signatories' attempted delegitimization of those of us who went on teaching is an obvious move in that direction.

If there were to be a total shut-



November 28 they can no longer fool even the most naive of students.

The most curious feature of their letter is the indignation they express at both non-striking faculty and the administration for having "prolong(ed) the disruption," even the most militant of the DFA would agree that an academic strike is a disruption that causes great harm to students and the university. In order to force the administration to pay higher salaries the members of the DFA decided to inflict such harm on their students and the university by going on strike. Who is responsible for this harm?

The motives for refusing to go on strike are varied, and greed and opportunism may be among them. I went on strike against my conscience and my better judgement. It is in the nature of an academic strike that teachers take their students hostage and threaten to do them harm in order to force financial concessions from the administration (that's why academic strikes never take place in the summer). I know many who refused to go on strike because they found this morally repugnant. True respect for minority dissent would entail the respect for a motive like this. Such

at the outset), and some comment seems called for.

What we have in that letter is a totalitarian insistence that when it comes to the bottom line there can be only one valid morality for faculty at this university, namely a trade-union morality conceived in class war terms. DFA members go on strike, a strike is by definition a justifiable assertion of workers' rights against exploitative employers, and anyone who chooses not to go on strike is ignorant of the real social realities and indifferent to the common good of the university community, including the good of students.

This seems to me cant. The