

WORDS FROM THE WISE ...



Soc articles: some confusion but same conclusion

To the GAZETTE:
Re: Sociology articles of March 3.

As students that have been involved in the proceedings thus far, we would like to comment on the above-mentioned articles.

Firstly there seems to be some confusion about the status of the Grievance Committee. The Sociology Course Union is behind this Committee, as it is a Committee of that Union. It exists in order to co-ordinate the members of the Union and the students in the two affected classes (Sociology 301 and 450A). The faculty are aware of this even though they do not recognize its existence as a valid departmental committee.

Secondly, the two students involved in the Pro Tem Undergraduate Advisory Committee withdrew from all investigations of Sociology 450A and 301. What inquiries have taken place have occurred without the sanction of the

Sociology Course Union.

The students in general are mistrustful because they do not know why this faculty investigation is taking place. In their eyes it is a redundant committee without a clear purpose in the investigation.

It must be realized that whatever recommendations are made by this committee, will be made with no student input at the decision-making level, by their own choice, because the students are certain that this type of Committee cannot solve the problems. The faculty, of course, went ahead regardless, and will make recommendations on hearing from the few students that appear before them.

Therefore the conclusion that must be reached by the students is that of your editorial: "Poor teaching will stay and we will continue to be screwed."

Yours truly,
The 4th floor of the
Forrest Building

Problems with Soc. 301 included a lack of integration of the computer programming and statistical parts of the course (caused largely by the absence of Poushinsky during the programming part of the course), a general neglect and lack of consideration of student problems in learning statistical theory and a basic lack of direction concerning the first term project.

In Soc. 405, problems included widespread intimidation of students by Poushinsky after students were told that this was their seminar, and a lack of direction and unwillingness on the part of Poushinsky to clarify what was required in the first term major paper. The result of all these problems was that about fifty per cent of the students enrolled in both courses dropped out of them. Many of those who did drop out were honors or qualifying graduate students. As these courses are required for honors and qualifying year students, dropping out means, in effect, the end of their academic careers.

The main point therefore is that Poushinsky is largely responsible for these students ending their academic careers. This situation should not be allowed to occur in sociology or any other department.

Thus Soc students are trying to make sure this does not occur again with Poushinsky by demanding that he be removed from the teaching responsibilities of any required courses in Soc after this year. They are not attacking him as an individual, but rather questioning his teaching ability on the basis of what has occurred in his courses.

In trying to deal with this problem, Soc students have taken great gains to follow the proper channels. First a survey of most students in both courses was taken to determine the level of student dissatisfaction. When widespread dissatisfaction (especially regarding Poushinsky's teaching ability) was found, the

Course Union then informed faculty of this situation and called for a departmental investigation.

When the faculty refused to set up a more or less impartial investigating committee (composed of two students elected by the Course Union and two faculty selected by the faculty with the Ombudsman as Chairman) the Course Union took the matter to the Ombudsman and the Dean.

In the meantime, the faculty tried to set up their own investigating committee composed of two members of the Executive Committee and any students they can get who are (or were) in either of the two courses. Most students, including Janet Webster and Simon Rasmussen, the student members of the Undergraduate Advisory Committee, have refused to participate on such a committee — partly because the issue is already outside the department, and partly because both faculty members of this committee will also approve the recommendations as members of the department's Executive Committee.

The only real conclusion the GAZETTE seemed to be able to reach concerning the "Poushinsky Affair" is that here are students getting screwed again. It seems to me that you have failed to see the wider implications of this issue.

Firstly, the efforts of Soc students to do something about poor teaching ability shows that students all over the university

do not have to accept inferior teaching practices, especially where their academic or other future plans may be in jeopardy.

Secondly, this issue points to the need for interdepartmental student support for what goes on in one department. Students in one department cannot really deal with many of their problems without frequent support from other students. This means students in all departments should build or strengthen course unions in their departments.

Thirdly, the Dalhousie Student Union should support course unions as a major priority in order to try to meet the needs of students. This should be financial as well as human support in the form of two or three full-time people to help students in any department set up course unions and also to help unify the efforts of all course unions.

I strongly suspect that the soc department is not the only department with teaching problems and that students in other departments as well as sociology need support to deal with such problems.

Respectively submitted,
A Concerned Student

Poushinsky student clears misconceptions

To the GAZETTE:

As a student who has been enrolled in both Sociology 301 and 450, I felt I should make a few comments concerning both courses and Professor Poushinsky's role in them. I also wish to do this in an attempt to clear up a few misconceptions and confusions that seemed to appear in the GAZETTE'S treatment of the problem in the March 3 issue.

The first point I wish to make is that the basic issue involved here is that of the right of students to try to rectify what appears to them to be poor

teaching ability on the part of one or more of their professors. The "Poushinsky Affair" is not a witch-hunt on the part of students or a personality conflict between a group of students and one professor, but a genuine attempt on the part of students in both courses, supported by members of the Sociology Course Union, to deal with real problems in both courses.

Soc. 301 is a statistics course for soc. students. Soc. 450 is an honors seminar which this year has centered on advanced research methods in sociology.

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Editor's Note:

What we said last time was that people like Guy MacLean and Don Clairmont were attempting to cloud this issue with endless streams of committees. They are also trying to smother the soc course union as they will try to smother every course union. They are trying it again this year because last year's "democratization" of the Soc department by Clairmont worked for a while.

And you are right when you say many more course unions are needed because that will

give us more control over what we learn.

Your third point is interesting. It would be wonderful if the Student Council would support, morally and financially all course unions, but it seems that it is the Council that theoretically is supposed to be representing the students' interests. But practically... Before going to Council with this proposal, check with Arts rep, Peter Dwyer, also a Soc student, about his views about bringing it before Council. He's not too much in favour of it.

Some praise and criticism

To the GAZETTE:

This letter has a two-fold purpose, to offer both criticism and praise, so I feel I shall approach them in that order.

I was most distressed at the appearance of the cover of one of the recent issues of the GAZETTE. I believe the caption was something to the effect that "This University Belongs to the Students...Dig It". Such an irresponsible and ill-informed statement was, to me, both reprehensible and disappointing.

Surely the GAZETTE staff is so adequately well informed to realize that this university belongs to the oft-forgotten and abused group of people known as tax-payers. Without at-

tempting to sound too much like the Chronicle-Herald, I think we should consider the Nova Scotia community members and tax-payers before we lay claim to ownership of the university.

Perhaps the caption should have read (more accurately) "This University is Used by the Students...Dig It". After all, I think "the name of the game" is community involvement and service, and in this manner we can return our skills, knowledge, expertise and ideas back into the community which so generously provides for our learning facilities.

On another note, which falls on a somewhat less critical line, I wish to commend you for your

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