

COURSE EVALUATION EVALUATED

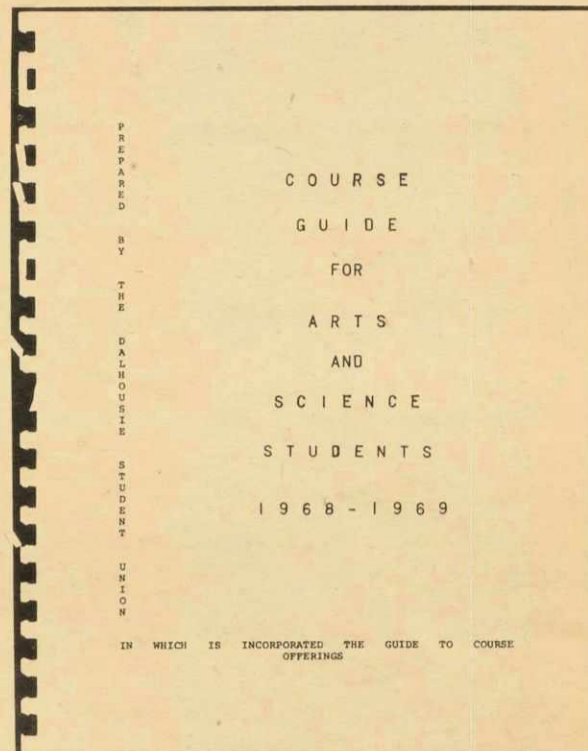
*Did YOU use this booklet during registration week?
 (Most Dal students, apparently, didn't.)
 If so, did it help you select your courses?
 Or was this \$2200 project, at best,
 merely a little better than "last year's horror show"?*



Ideally, a course evaluation survey should provide to students, especially new students, something which old traditions and campus rumours will never accurately provide: a clear and relatively unbiased reference indicating what are the best courses, and who are the best professors. Besides this, the evaluation booklet should be readily available to students BEFORE they begin to register. But a GAZETTE survey showed that this year's "Course Guide for Arts and Science Students" failed to live up to even the simplest of these aims.

Nearly half of over a dozen students interviewed said that they had not seen the course evaluation before they registered; in view of the great collection of papers amassed by students as they crawl through the registration line, it is unfortunate that the surveys were not conspicuously enough displayed to be used by all. But the comments from those who did read the evaluations tended to be even worse; not one of the students interviewed had found the evaluation of any use in selecting his or her courses. Ruth Jackson (Sc. I) said that she found an entry for only one of the courses she considered taking: it was listed "Due to program difficulties, no comment is available as yet." Finding this both ungrammatical and not overly informative, Ruth said "I asked Herm about it, and he said not to take it." Other students' remarks included "Nothing in it was relevant to what I'm taking," and "I don't go by it."

Most students were impressed, as was the GAZETTE, by the amount of time, effort, and plan-



ning which had originally gone into the project. Course Evaluation Chairman Bob Daley (who heads the committee again this year) explained the hundreds of man-hours which were spent in preparing the book. Daley himself worked on it full-time during the summer (apart from taking care of his Student Housing Service duties) and the rest of the committee, consisting of Jim Robar, Peter Crawford, and Judy Peacock also worked on it between last November and May. Several professors gave a considerable amount of time, and a number of secretaries and computer operators worked on it too, adding to the amount of time spent on the programme as well as accounting for part of the \$2200 price tag which the whole study bears.

But the general opinion was that, while the effort was excellent, the result was disappointing. Student Council Engineering Representative Dave Bell commented that "It was a big effort, but misdirected"; Bell felt, however, that a groundwork had been laid and the project should definitely not be abandoned. Other comments ranged from "There's a great deal of useless information that is in fact found in the calendar," to a remark by Dan McSweeney (Arts III) that "if I wanted to know something about a course, this sort of thing wouldn't help much—I want to know what a course is going to demand of me."

The general lack of EVALUATION struck most students. Many complained that too few courses were evaluated—a problem which was not the fault of Daley's Committee but rather of students or professors concerned — and one frequent complaint was that course reviews which DID appear told little about either the good or bad points of the course concerned; students who checked their previous year's courses were concerned at the sparsity of comments and, generally, the inadequacy of even the most complete reviews. A general impression was that several courses had been "whitewashed" with insipid comments, or no comments at all. Dave Bell suggested that perhaps the evaluations were deliberately mild in order to atone for "last year's horror show".

All students were concerned about the accuracy of the statistical reports and their true significance. Committee member Judy Peacock claimed that she had at first favoured having courses "reviewed" by graduate or senior students instead of, or in addition to the purely statistical approach employed when the questionnaires were eventually distributed to students during the last weeks of lectures last year. But the committee overruled her in favour of its computerized statistical format. Even if the merits of massive class-reporting are superior to those of reviewing by a few selected students, Dave Bell pointed out that the reports reflect only the views of those students who attended the particular class at which the questionnaire was given, and therefore would distort the opinion of the class as a whole.

The co-operation of the faculty is virtually essential in conducting any sort of evaluation or survey, so perhaps there were weighty "political" reasons why criticisms were not articulated as sharply as may have been deserved. The reverse would not seem to be true. There should be no reason why superior or excellent professors, and better-than-average courses should not be described as such, without in any way implying that professors not so selected are less than competent. In fact, the whole evaluation booklet was inadequate. Its statistics may be valuable for high-level student-faculty discussions, but for little else. Bob Daley commented that the new course-evaluation committee, built around himself and students with evaluation experience at other universities, is already contemplating various changes in next year's study. Such changes are urgently needed. The course evaluation booklet (or booklets) must become less a collection of calendar reprints and "no comments", and more of an aid to students genuinely seeking the best possible courses for their own programmes.



Dalhousie Student Union

UNION DES ÉTUDIANTS DE DALHOUSIE

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AVE ET VALE !!

URGENT NOTICE

To all interested Dalhousie students:

The SUB IS OPENING - - soon!! Campus clubs and organizations will be moving in the middle of October. The official opening bash is on November 8; tentative plans are under way.

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Plans must be made now by all clubs, organizations, committees, groups, sub-groups, majority groups and subversive groups who wish to participate. Since this opening is taking the place of Fall Festival Weekend this year, it is expected that any of these herein before mentioned clubs, organizations, etc. wishing to capitalize on this opportunity to publicize their activities, recruit members, and most important, to make the opening a real swinging thing, should be making plans now.

THEREFORE

Hereby take notice that all those interested in taking part in the planning and organization of this spectacular event are required --- nay, even requested and begged, solicited no less, to present themselves with all possible expediency to the PUB Office in the Arts Annex (formerly known and loved and identified under the title of ORIENTATION OFFICE), which now serves as the headquarters for the SUB Opening Committee.

Manpower and women's intuition are required in all areas of the opening programme.

Societies must forthwith and straightway contact the SUB Opening Committee regarding their plans for participation in the new headquarters.

DO IT NOW, OR BE LEFT BEHIND!!

UNCLE CLEM NEEDS YOU.