

Snobby school chauvinism

by Alan Adams

Nothing so typifies the elitest attitude of Dalhousie University than the administration's policy towards transfer students and transfer credits from another post-secondary institution. The whole process is so out-dated and invalid that a professor, who asked to remain anonymous, described it as a severe case of "institutional arrogance."

For the student transferring from another college or university the possibilities of receiving credit for completed courses are very slim. University regulations state that transfer credits may be granted only for classes equivalent to classes offered at Dalhousie, and only in subjects recognized as having standing in a faculty of Arts and Sciences. The matter in question concerns the validity of the regulation and judgement brought down in interpreting these regulations.

The stress of equivalent courses raises serious questions concerning Dalhousie's attitude towards education. As a Gazette reporter, I approached several professors from the faculty of Arts and Sciences concerning this matter. Most professors were critical of the administration's policy. They all asked to remain anonymous in fear of reprisals (although they never explained what could possibly happen.) The prevailing attitude was that a legitimate course at another college or university should be consid-

ered legitimate here, and that students who receive exemption from courses should receive credit for that particular course. (Exemption is defined as the student having a solid enough background that he or she may proceed to higher level courses although not taking the required prerequisites at Dalhousie.) Most professors felt that the administration's position represents an eighteenth century attitude towards education.

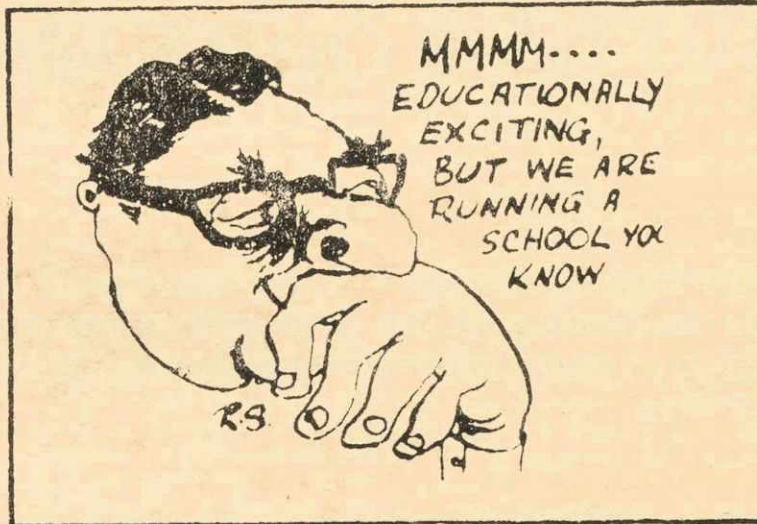
The policy of transfer credits does not effect the majority of the student population at Dal but to those it does effect the policy seems unjust and sometimes disastrous. Take the case of Greg Mitman. (In using Greg Mitman I do not want to signal out one individual, Mitman could easily be transfer student Jacques Strapp in Physical Education or Reid More in Arts.)

Greg Mitman came to Dalhousie from Morivan College (outside of Philadelphia) with 24 credits, the equivalent of 6 complete courses at Canadian universities. After registering at Dal, Mitman was informed that although his credits would be used towards his application for admission, he would receive absolutely no credit for these completed courses. In essence he would have to re-commence university again. Mitman re-checked the calendar and compared his American courses to those of Dalhousie. To his surprise there existed similarities between the two, particularly in the sciences. In fact, the same

text is used in Calculus as was in his math in the U.S., and for his chemistry course Dalhousie had actually considered using the same text.

Mitman then consulted with the individual professor for the courses he had registered for. Two agreed to give him exemption from first year

because of Mitman's strong background that he was given permission to proceed to higher level courses without having taken the required prerequisite at Dalhousie. Chute added that he has personally written a letter to the Committee On Studies stating that in his own opinion



courses in their departments on the basis that his American courses provided essentially the same background as an equivalent course at Dalhousie would. But Mitman was told credit was not possible because of the administration's policy.

Mitman's Professor of Chemistry 240, Dr. W.A. Chute, told the Gazette that the quality of work done by Mitman in his first year chemistry is the equivalent of the same at Dal. He said "We believe the student has the equivalent of our own class." Chute explained that it was

Mitman should receive full credit, not exemption, for his course taken in the US. (the Committee On Studies is a faculty student committee set up to decide if a student has suffered "undue hardship" because of administrative policy.)

The same also applies for Mitman's biology instructor. Professor R.P. McBride thinks Mitman should receive full credit for the American version of first year biology. McBride explained that in order for Mitman to proceed to higher level courses he had to first pass an entrance test

Comment is an opinion column open to members of the University community who wish to present an informed opinion on a topic of their selection.

which he described as last year's biology 1000 final. McBride feels that Mitman should be given credit, not exemption, for his earlier course. Mitman passed the entrance test with honours.

Dean L. Haley, Assistant Dean of Arts and Sciences thinks Dalhousie's policies on transfer students and credits, as presently applied, are in need of modification. He said that "some sort of credit for showing you know it" should be instituted. Dean Haley said the process of re-evaluating and modifying the regulation would take a long time but for the time being Dal will stick by the book.

Registrar Arnold Tingley, who describes himself as "a bureaucrat who goes by the rules and nothing else", accused the Gazette of irresponsible journalism for questioning Dal's policy on transfer credits and insisted that I was wasting his time.

Tingley's attitude appears to be representative of Dal's "institutional arrogance". To date the University's policy on transfer credits, although widely recognized as unjust and antiquated has avoided the criticism it deserves. Policies which reflect a chauvinistic view of education and that are a source of hardship and frustration for a many individuals, however, have no place in an institution that purports to embrace an unfettered quest for knowledge.

Letters

Dissent

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perous Soviet citizens. If they failed to do anything, it was that they failed to keep silent in a country of decades-long injustice and mass repressions. The fate of these people after they were forced to leave Russia is a dramatic one. They are persons without a country, with broken families, without a language for communication, without qualified jobs. Many of the dissidents did not want to leave Russia. Some even committed suicide: Ilya Gabay, Elena Stroeve, Anatoly Yakobson. They could not remain in Russia, but unlike what was said by Professor Maslov, they never "tried to find a place for themselves in the West".

Answering the question concerning Solzhenitsyn, Professor Maslov "would object to the characterization of Solzhenitsyn as a celebrated writer". Moreover, he does not consider this Nobel prize winner and author of several important books "to be a writer per se". For some time I have not had any particular feelings about Solzhenitsyn. I do not believe that in our pluralistic and materialistic

age anybody can pretend to be a prophet. But I am sure that the Soviet authorities who at an early stage wanted to use Solzhenitsyn against their own liberal intelligentsia nowadays bite their nails when they think of the strange phenomenon of Solzhenitsyn. Like Leo Tolstov, he grew into a figure of such a calibre while he was still in the country, that the Soviet officials could do nothing but throw him out of Russia to "the rotten West".

But Solzhenitsyn belongs now not so much to the world as to Russia and, to a great extent, to Russia's past. Solzhenitsyn is an enormous indication of the spiritual and nationalistic developments taking place in Soviet Russia under the surface of its social waters. Whether we agree with Solzhenitsyn or not, he is a loud scream mixed with the wail of "the country of weeping and gnashing of teeth". For his testimony he in no way has deserved anyone's contempt. It is with compassion for his enormous life-long road, with gratitude for his kind words over the graves of many millions of Stalin's victims, and with understanding of human failures and vulnerabilities that we may pay our respects to him.
Yuri Glazov,
Professor of Russian

No rights in Canada

To the Gazette:

It is my intention to correct an 'essential' error and present a contrary opinion to those of you who managed to decipher and accept the argument of Mr. Donovan's article, **Essential The Right to Strike**, in the October 26 issue of the Gazette. Mr. Donovan's error lies in his argument for an essential right to strike. Why, I ask Mr. Donovan, is such a right essential? More fundamentally, I ask, upon what basis is this right founded?

To Mr. Donovan the right to strike is what it means to be a Canadian; the right to say 'no' to conditions of work, which thus distinguishes a worker from a slave. But are the postal workers actually slaves? Are they the human chattels of Post Office management? Our definition of a slave must surely be expanded to make sense of Mr. Donovan's article. It appears to Mr. Donovan that questions of monetary demands are not the issue, rather that the postal workers are, in effect, slaves of their employment. But if this line of thinking is accepted, are we not all slaves when employed? I think not.

Rightly or wrongly, the issue hinges on the right to strike for worker's conditions. But in my opinion this does not imply the right to say 'no' to maintain a level of integrity greater than that of a slave, as Mr. Donovan contends. The postal workers, at least, surely possess the right to quit! Moreover, appealing to authority to justify a right to strike is to argue fallaciously. Such an argument, like that of Mr. Donovan's, is **argumentum ad verecundiam**; even though the point of the appeal to Mr. Trudeau's statement is to show a somewhat contradictory stance in the Prime Minister's statements. Since Mr. Donovan fails to validly establish that a right to strike exists, how can any rational Canadian accept his line of argument?

The answer is that they can't. The right to strike is not, as Mr. Donovan implies by his reference to Watergate in 1974, a basic right like that of, say, speech. Indeed, in Canada there are no basic rights as such, only basic liberties afforded protection

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