

opinions

Power of academic freedom

Political correctness has been pervading every aspect of life on campus over the past few weeks. With the forum on political correctness and the resulting media coverage, it has become an issue that has immersed people in antagonistic debate and placed people at, what seems to be, opposing ends of the spectrum.

Well, what to say? How is it that the Anti-Discriminatory Harassment Policy is being labelled as politically correct? Who is doing so? Why do these people claim that this policy is seeing to the needs of special interest groups? How is it that the policy is being called into question for limiting academic freedom and freedom of expression?

Firstly, it is important to note who is classifying the policy as politically correct. It is not those who have developed and worked on the policy and who are now actively trying to have it put before Senate for approval. No, in fact the group that is labelling it as politically correct are comprised mostly of white, upper class, heterosexual males. Those who are in a position of power. Those who are the select few who are privileged in our society. They wish to maintain and perpetuate their positions of power and what better way than to attack the Anti-Discriminatory Harassment Policy as politically correct, as limiting academic freedom and as restricting freedom of speech.

Our individualistic sensibilities tell us that we should be opposed to such things; but wait, let's look at it from another perspective. It is unfair to assume that it is politically correct, that response is simple backlash from the political right wing (there is a history of such attacks from the right). That claim loses credibility just in

the fact that it is reactionary; little actual thought has been given to the policy itself.

Academic freedom. Are we in fact talking about academic freedom or are we talking about the maintenance of academic power? Those who now wield such power in a classroom setting want to continue their stronghold on such power. The same applies to freedom of expression; is it not actually power of expression that we are talking about? Is it not that these people want to maintain the absolute and total control that they have had as a result of their position of power.

The policy is an attempt to allow people to establish voices which have in the past been silenced. These are not special interest groups as some would have us believe. Women, people of colour, lesbians and gays, people with disabilities, etc. They actually make up the majority in terms of numbers (women are about 54%, people of colour 15%, lesbians and gays 10-20%, etc.) These people have been actively silenced and with the present power structure there seems that there is little room for the establishment of such voices unless we take an active role. The policy is one such manifestation of this active role.

Those opposed to this policy have also indicated that it is not necessary. As a queer man I can say that that is not the case. I have been at this university since mid-September and have been attacked, vilified and degraded from the very highest ranks of the administration and have felt marginalized, unwanted and silenced in some of my classes. I had no method of recourse except to end my studies here. In the period of time since I began at Dalhousie I have

seriously considered dropping out three times. I have come very close to doing so as a result of the lack of sensitivity, understanding and respect of faculty, administration and students.

So, in fact is this policy politically correct, restricting academic freedom and freedom of expression or is it in fact empowering people who have in the past been silenced and made to feel illegitimate at this university by virtue of their very presence? Consider.

Anthony Roberts, BGLAD!

SHEARLOGIC HAIRSTYLING

Women \$16.00

Men \$11.00

shampoo, cut and style (gst included)

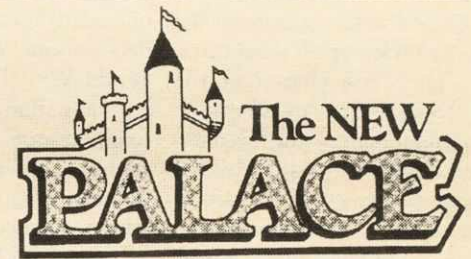
"All of our staff are master hairstylists"

Fenwick Medical Centre, 5595 Fenwick Street

492 - 4715



1595 BARRINGTON STREET IN HALIFAX



1721 BRUNSWICK STREET IN HALIFAX

NEXT WEEK: TROOPER

FEB. 26&27:

BARNEY BENTALL

NOW OPEN

WED-SUN 9 PM-3:30 AM

ENTERTAINMENT HOTLINE 454-6666

PLAYING ALL WEEK:

LOCAL FAVORITE

ICU

NEXT WEEK FREDDIE JAMES

ENTERTAINMENT

HOTLINE 429-5959

MISTY MOON SHOWCASES THIS WEEKEND

THURS, FEB. 11

SIMON TELL

THE QUEST

FRI, FEB. 12

JONATHAN M

THE QUEST

SIMON TELL

SAT, FEB. 13

BLACK POOL

WAYNE NICHOLSON

THE TREES

JACK BUTLER

HALIFAX'S NIGHTLY ENTERTAINMENT HOTSPOTS

Storm rages on

Anyone who has been privy to the debate concerning the nature and purpose of academic scholarship which is currently raging within American and Canadian universities, will no doubt agree that this issue is far from being resolved. This discourse takes its empirical evidence from a variety of sources, most notably the dire state of the educational system and its failure to turn out students who are as intellectually competent as their counterparts in other countries. The reasons cited for this perilous turn of events (after all, it was never like this in the good old days) include the assault on the intellectual content of the classical liberal tradition by renegade professors and teaching departments at various academic institutions across North America. That tradition, with its emphasis on rationality, progress, freedom, and empiricism was itself part of a protracted struggle with more conservative traditions during the past two centuries or so. As a result, we have before us a set of circumstances that beg to be addressed: the presentation of a specific canon believed to contain the totality of everything important,

and teaching faculties which are said to represent, more or less, a wide range of interests, beliefs, opinions, and methods of research. Funding and accessibility are other issues marginally associated with the academic curriculum, but nevertheless just as vital.

By now this 'dilemma' is common knowledge for everyone, however the ways in which it is interpreted and understood are far from clear. A case in point is the editorial 'The calm in the eye of the maelstrom' (*Dalhousie Gazette*, February 4, 1993). The author presents, in autobiographical detail, the attainment of her intellectual faculties. Her search for a specific identity included the intellectual pursuit of a "sophisticated, passionate and sound philosophy" with which she could somehow acknowledge her individuality.

She then sets out the programmatic guidelines under which this endeavour took place: the "idolater [sic] at the front of the class" who moulded her mind, the "vigorous discussions" she has witnessed taking place between

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8



TEACHING ASSISTANTS PART-TIME SESSIONALS

The Educational Workers Organizing Committee (EWOC) has launched a drive to win legal recognition for all TAs and Sessionals at Dal.

Together, we can improve our conditions on campus.

SIGN A CARD...TODAY!

For more information, or to sign a membership card, drop by our

EWOC INFORMATION TABLE

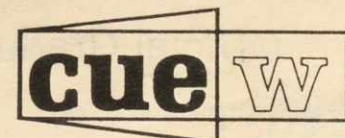
in the

MAIN LOBBY OF THE SUB

TUESDAY (16TH) OR

THURSDAY (18TH)

10 am - 2 pm.



or phone/visit our offices at #305, 6389 Coburg (at Oxford); tel: 429-0282