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A Commendable Decision

In a surprise announcement this week, Dr. Hicks, Dalhousie vice-president and dean of Arts and Science, said that Christmas examinations would be abolished at the university -- at least on a trial basis.

The announcement does not come unheralded: rumors to the effect have crept over the campus for the last several months. What is surprising, however, is that the administration should have reached the decision with seemingly so little ado.

This is the second move directly affecting the students the faculty has taken this year. The first, the granting of a study break, only gave Dalhousie students a privilege enjoyed by students at many other Canadian universities. However, the decision on Christmas examinations clearly puts the university on a level above that of most other Canadian colleges.

In his announcement, Dr. Hicks said there was some opposition to the move from a portion of the faculty. This is hardly surprising. If one is so convinced that examinations serve at least some purpose, as presumably at least some of the faculty must do since they have been accustomed to setting two yearly sets of examinations.

However, the value of any examination is certainly at least debatable. Presumably, by the time the student has reached university, he has gone beyond the point where memorization is considered a good thing. And it is this purpose which examinations seem to serve too often. The faculty is surely aware that at the approach of Munro Day, students begin saying to themselves: "Well, I suppose it's time I did some work." For the next three weeks or so, the student feverishly crams into his skull as much quickly-learned, easily-forgotten information as possible.

So it will be seen that examinations are not necessarily a complement of university training.

There is one further point in Dr. Hick's announcement that should help quiet the fears of those who might feel students would not do any work whatsoever between registration and Munro Day. Dr. Hicks said that professors would be expected to supply the registrar with records of work done by students during regular classroom periods. This, surely, will do as much as Christmas examinations ever did in helping the student to "learn".

In the final analysis, then, what the removal of Christmas examinations will probably mean is no change whatsoever in the learning habits of most students, and the addition of two extra weeks of lecture periods which would have otherwise been taken each year by a meaningless exercise in memory.

A HOMECOMING AT DALHOUSIE

The Alumni office announced this week that a homecoming will be held during Convocation Week. The dates for the homecoming are May 15, 16, and 17 so that old graduates of Dalhousie will be able to attend this year's convocation which is scheduled for May 17.

The programme will include lectures by members of the various faculties of the university, several receptions and banquets and a Homecoming Ball. The prime purpose of the homecoming will be to encourage members of the alumni to revisit Dalhousie and to renew their interest in their alma mater.

In recent years the apathy of both the alumni and the student body has grown increas-

ingly worse. It is becoming harder and harder to get any exhibition of spirit or interest in this university by anyone who has attended it. For this reason the Gazette welcomes the idea of an annual Dalhousie Homecoming, while at the same time we are skeptical of how well it will succeed.

It seems like a hard, if not impossible task to stir up interest in a university after a person has graduated, when it is quite likely that that person had no interest in Dalhousie when he was here as a student.

That such apathy and disinterest in Dalhousie exists among its student population, both of the past and present, is very clear. Most students who left Dalhousie last year, for example, did so with a sigh of relief that their days here were over. The opinions expressed at meetings of last year's graduating class showed that the only feeling held by most of the graduates was one of bitterness towards several people and regulations which are part of this university. With such an attitude prevalent now it seems to be an immense undertaking to try and get people to return to Dalhousie who left here many years ago.

And so it is with a certain amount of skepticism that the Gazette views the plans for the homecoming. We hope it succeeds, but we doubt that it will.

An Excellent Speech

It was indeed a heartening experience to hear Mr. Douglas speak in Room 21 last Thursday. While not all those present might necessarily agree with the policies he expounded, we think all must agree that he had something to say, and that he said it well, a marked improvement on the attitude of some of Canada's political leaders who have spoken here in the past.

As Mr. Douglas pointed out, Canada is facing a period of crisis in her internal and external affairs, despite the myopic mutterings of some of the more conservative elements in our society. Many people have been wondering lately what the government's policy towards these crises is, and what action is proposed. The New Democratic Party might or might not have the right answers, but at least it has answers and is not reticent to put them before the public.

One need only look at two of the points brought up in Mr. Douglas' speech: the question of nuclear arms; and Canada's policy if and when Britain enters the European Common Market. Mr. Diefenbaker has stated within the last week or two that Canada cannot accept nuclear arms under the present terms offered by the U. S. government. Well and good, but why take so long to make such a relatively simple and innocuous statement, and what is going to happen if and when Congress alters its policy on nuclear weapons.

As for the second point, we have a suspicious feeling that there might be some truth in Mr. Douglas' charge that the government is beating its breast and complaining that someone is trying to destroy the Commonwealth. Perhaps Mr. Diefenbaker might do better to say less and do more about what will soon face the world as an accomplished fact.

Every election year the traditional parties take their traditional platforms out of the mothballs and present them to a long-suffering public. Indeed one wonders whether the fact that there are two major parties in Canada is not a plot to allow more Members of Parliament to sit while professing relatively similar views. Let's have some leadership from Ottawa from whatever party is in power, rather than the present prevarications, which make Canada resemble the lost tribe wandering in the wilderness, rather than one of the world's leading powers.

LITTLE MAN ON CAMPUS



"NO, I'M NOT INTERESTED IN THEATRE WORK - I JUST LIKE TO SIT OVER HERE AND WATCH THE DRAMA CLASSES DISMISS."

The Critical Eye

TWO OF CANADA'S ...

The masthead of our local paper tells us that Halifax is served by "two of Canada's great newspapers." It has been a question of long standing with newspaper readers in the Nova Scotia capital whether this notation means that of Canada's newspaper's, two great ones are sold in Halifax; or whether it means that all Canadian newspapers are great, and two of them are published in Halifax. That two newspapers are sold in Halifax is true; whether they are great is something to be determined.

But perhaps we are too harsh: perhaps they are indeed great. We must admit it is a restive thing to return to the Halifax papers after reading the papers of other cities. The New York Times is full of the latest disagreements on the international scene; The Washington Post tells us just what's going wrong in the United States. Even most of our own Canadian papers are full of the latest disappointments on the political, economic and social scenes.

After reading Lippman, Reston, Krock, the Alsops et, al. on just what's wrong with the world, it is a joyful experience to pick up the issues of the local papers. Are we faced with international and national crises of all orders when we turn homeward? Why not! Rather than being wearied all over again by the arms race, hurricanes, floods and all the other forms of disasters, we can rest our jaded brains by scanning The Chronical-Herald and The Mail-Star. Here, in the one we find out just how well the Guernsey cattle are faring throughout Nova Scotia; and, in the other, we can find out what a joy it is that the park benches in Halifax are going to be painted green again this year.

We must be thankful, then, that the publishers and editors of the local papers act as our guides in peaceful living. Realizing that little happiness is to be found by their readers in having to read about all sorts of unhappiness in the world, the local papers attempt to spare their subscribers such hardships. What's the best way to do it? Why, just don't report all the bad news at all.

Thus, on the day when the French government and the Algerian rebels reached agreement on the day when Hazen Argue quit the New Democratic Party, on the day when trouble is brewing in British Guiana and one of the days when John Glenn had been forced from going aloft by bad weather, the banner headline of our afternoon paper was:

"Dartmouth Buys Site for Park."

We do not wish to infer that it is unimportant that the City of Dartmouth bought a property near Sullivan's Pond -- this is obviously of great importance and will have far-reaching consequences upon the future development of many things (such as, for example, Sullivan's pond).

We only wonder if it's worth spending eight cents to read all about it.