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on the worldloads of these positions. It is not so much the depth of the problem which creates work for a Secretariate as the extent of the solution as can be demonstrated by examples:

- (1) Academic Affairs a) an active programme for obtaining a measure of student participation in departmental decision making commensurate with even the most minimal concept of democracy, plus b) a commitment to a course evaluation as a necessary, real, proper academic service to students (a new idea to some people in the Dalhousie Student Union, Inc.) c) a campaign to coordinate the activities of the various students on committees making academic policy and providing them with research assistance d) an effort to articulate a student union philosophy of education, the role of the student and the position of the University in society on which future briefs on student

aid, government grants, tuition fees and building priorities could be based

- e) handling complaints and inquiries of individual students; would make this job for more than one person requiring much more than token energies and some clear sightedness.
- (2) Communications - whatever one may say about the "communications problem" at Dalhousie its existence does not a priori elevate this secretariate to indispensibility. To borrow a phrase, the editorialist has failed to analyze whether the problem is the fault of the medium or the message. All manner of devices including radio receivers implanted in the skulls of the members of the Dalhousie Community might be unsuccessful if the material to be broadcast was essentially devoid of meaning for people. (I shall propose alternative messages in my conclusion).
- (3) Community Affairs - given that many of the forms of

active programmes in this department have been curtailed against resistance one could point out that (a) volunteer programmes, (b) educational forums, (c) lecture and film series, (d) assistance to and participation in community groups, (e) research on and the articulation of political positions on such external issues as ecology, native rights and third world struggles and (f) extension programmes could be placed within the mandate of this office.

- (4) Housing - Whether this could be judged as a successful secretariate depends upon whether one feels that there are one or two housing problems. If one feels that the only problem is that students have difficulty finding accommodation suitable in price, quality and location, then it is a duplication of existing services. If one feels that the University (administration) is disrupting the social fabric of the city with

its current policy of abdicating responsibility to provide accommodation for its expanding population of dependents, then this office has the responsibility of providing the initiative to develop a housing policy which takes account of this institution's impact on the city.

So all these positions could involve onerous responsibilities and our editorialists petty economism merely obscures the fact that the secretariates are prevented from having the impact they might. By what? By a similar economic attitude to the position and role of a student union. We don't have a student services secretariate receiving \$125 or \$50 per month to oversee liquor operations, food sales, vending machines, parking lots, bookstores, entertainment events and building management because these are seen as main stream responsibilities and assigned to highly paid, professional staff. Housing, Community Affairs, Academic Affairs and Communications, on the other hand, are marginal, with ambiguous mandates, and suffering from lack of direction and assistance as well as occasional actual obstruction.

The fact is that the students' "union" does not deal with the salient issues that affect its members as students. A line of action has been adopted which places emphasis on the aspect of this organization's existence celebrated by the fact of incorporation. We see business unionism at its worst in the outcome of student politics. Normally politics implies that the participants have positions on issues that require the formulation of programmes to deal with problems. Here we have elaborate and not so elaborate schemes for the formulation for such positions with the result that there is no objective basis for making choices among candidates or platforms.

The fact that there are limits to subjectivity resulting from the fact that personality cannot be communicated in the way that issues can bring me to the conclusion which I hinted at earlier. The Communications problem is one of content: who needs to make a choice or become involved if there are no choices or programmes to absorb your energies. Dalhousie's media are not vital because they have chosen not to be channels for presenting choices, programmes and issues or rather (to avoid anthropomorphism) those who control them have chosen that course. Any hope that we will see a more active electorate requires that the student "union" deal with all the issues which affect the quality of a student's life and stop avoiding them through abdication or tokenism.

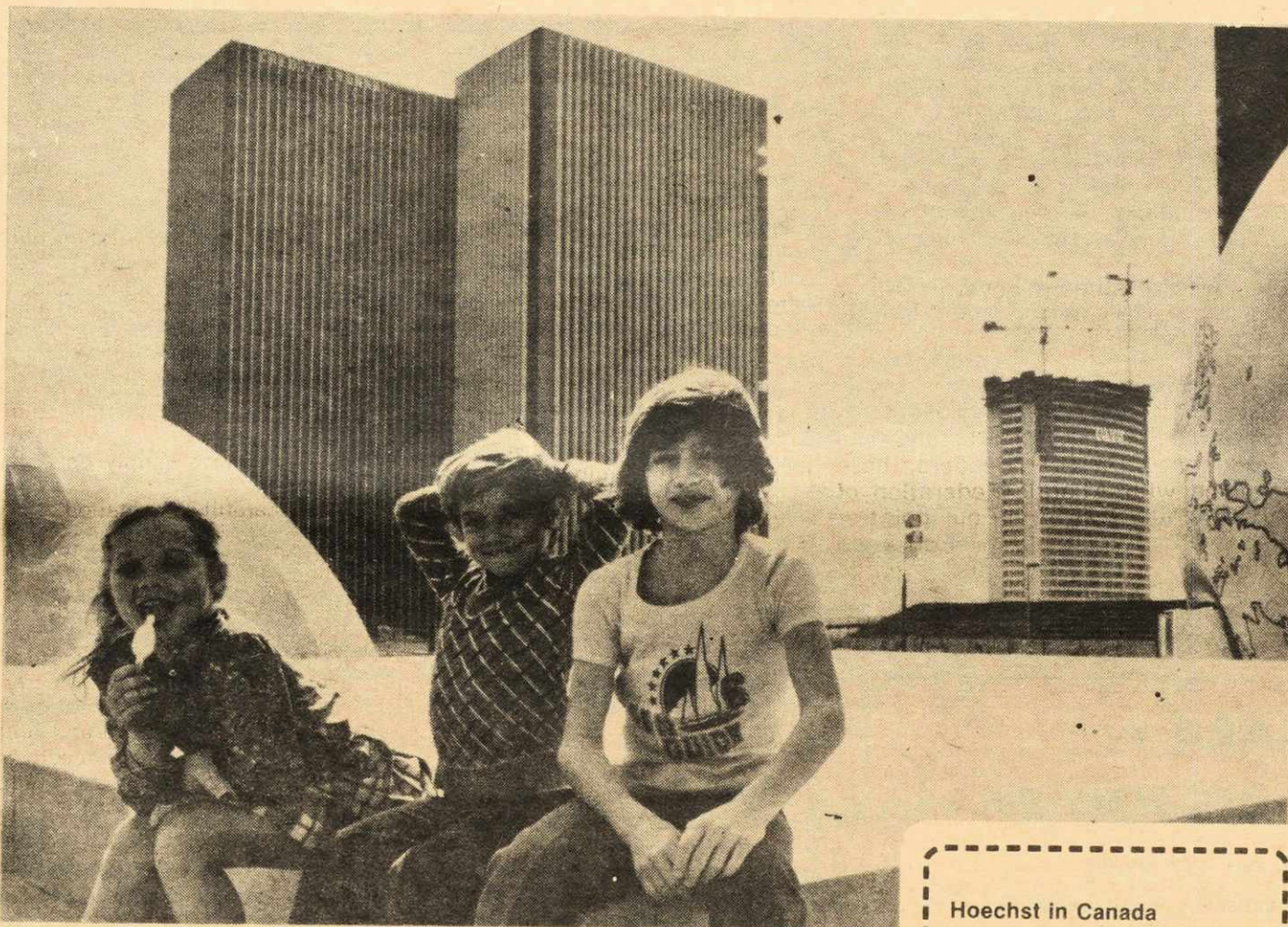
Your editorialist would be well advised to take a step back so that she no longer compares the relative resources of the secretariates but looks at their weakness relative to the service aspects. Then s/he will have an adequate appreciation of the current role of the union in Capitalist education.

In struggle,
John D'Orsay,
Community Affairs Secretary

Thanks for the tooth

To the Gazette: While skating on Thursday the 12th of February at Dalhousie Rink I had the misfortune of losing a temporary "peg cap tooth". Even though I felt it was hopeless to find it, I reported my loss to the manager who was most sympathetic. He instantly organized a search which first involved the snow removal and the draining of ice and snow. This was sifted through the only available sieve, which was a blue J-cloth. When

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