

Women at Dalhousie 100 years later

BY SUSAN LUNN

She stands there, closely holding her books. One wonders what she is thinking. She is dressed almost from head to toe even though it is the late summer. The hat, with its wide brim, shields her eyes, as She looks around her. She is one of a few other women there and She is one of Dalhousie's first women graduates.

In 1985, Dalhousie celebrated women's 100th year at Dalhousie. Beginning with Margaret Newcombe graduating in 1885, to the women graduates in 1985, women have taken many steps to secure their right to a university education.

Some other early graduates were Elize Ritchie, Agnes S. Bacter, Annie I. Hamilton, and Lucy Maud Montgomery. These were some of the women who faced the discrimination at Dalhousie and tried to change it.

In 1885, women were not admitted into the law school, then known as the jewel in Dalhousie's crown.

100 school years later, female enrollment in the law school decreased by 5 per cent from 1984, while male enrollment increased by 9.6 per cent. What would that woman looking about her think about that?

As well, at the turn of the century, female students were not allowed in the gymnasium and the library for fear that they would distract the male students.

While women's enrollment in the university was increasing, the problem of discrimination still existed. In 1938, for example, dances were prohibited at Shirreff Hall.

Until 1932, Dalhousie did not grant women professional status.

But the period of the 40s to the 60s was seen as the worst as discrimination reached a peak in the blatant segregation against women.

In the 1940's, only four women graduated from medicine as compared to 21 in the 1920's.

This drop seems to be continuous still for in 1985, when female enrollment into medicine decreased by 1.2 per cent, male enrollment on the other hand increased by one per cent.

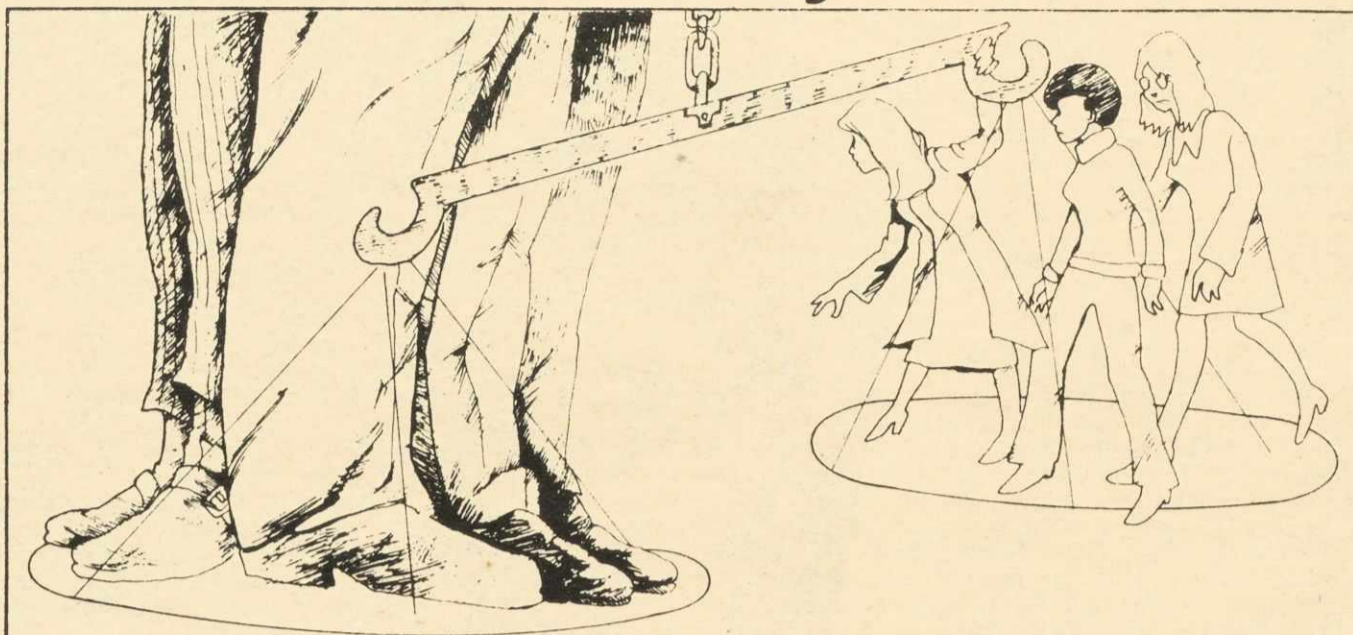
President Kerr (1945-1963) promoted the enactment of discriminatory regulations that were within his power.

The most famous of these was the Board's restrictions on the appointments of January 13, 1950. It stated: "It shall be the general policy of the university not to employ or retain on the academic staff, above the rank of lecturer, the wife of any permanent member of the said staff. When the wife of any such permanent member is employed, within the terms mentioned, the engagement shall be for a specific period not to exceed one year at a time."

This restriction, along with many others, made women appear as parts, or extensions, of their husbands. Women did not even challenge this until the late 1960's.

During the 1950's, women were forced to retire when they were 60 instead of 65. Women who were married to faculty men were denied tenure and promotion. The difference in salaries increased greatly with the recent introduction of the new pay scales.

In 1984, 78.5 per cent of the members of the Dalhousie Staff Association were female. Yet from this 83 per cent were employed in clerical jobs which have a salary range of \$16,204 to \$20,707 per year. Only 17 per cent of these women were employed in the higher paid technical jobs which have a salary range of \$19,000 to \$32,383 per year.



Aside from discrimination, women were made to suffer from blatant pornography. Judith Fingard, a History professor at Dal, recalls a poster she saw posted in the early 1970's. The poster exposed a woman's bare midriff. Fingard described this as being, "... sexually explicit, depersonalized, and dehumanized ... making myself feel helpless and isolated."

In 1969, women who were married to faculty men grouped together to fight a repeal of the discriminatory Board restriction of 1950 for it denied women access to tenure.

In the mid-1970's, a women's faculty organization was created (DWFO). It began by demanding an investigation into the status of women at Dalhousie.

The investigation went from 1976 until 1979. It showed that women were underpaid, few in number, found mostly in the lower ranks, absent from any higher administration and lacking any real consideration for their roles as mother.

The women from the 40's to the 80's still seem to be clustered in the lower ranks, far from the higher positions such as the Board of Governors, where there are only ten women out of a total of 42 members.

Women were eventually allowed into the faculty even though their appointments were few and far between. Fingard writes that, "... the university treated women faculty as cheap labour and an inferior caste."

Even still today, women in Dalhousie faculty departments tend towards more traditionally acceptable fields such as dental hygiene, nursing, French and social work. And the women tend to be scarce in the male-dominated areas such as biology, chemistry, political science and math.

It is somewhat difficult to understand then, in the light of all these early discriminations, why women would wish to enter university or why they were admitted. Fingard writes, "women's rights had little to do with their admission to university. It owed more to their belief that it was the duty of society to cultivate the minds of its supposedly few exceptional women, while the rest were expected to stay in their places."

There are perhaps four reasons why women were admitted into Dalhousie.

The first of these was the belief that higher education made women more able to be suitable wives for their male peers. Convention would also have us believe that women only went to university to find a husband.

Secondly, the First World War and the Depression made men scarce and female student enrollment rose to 40 per cent in the Arts and Science faculty.

There was also an increasing respect for education especially amongst the Scottish and Presbyterians.

Lastly, for the past 30 years women had gradually increased their prominence in the teaching profession. Teaching was the only profession readily open to women and universities could offer a higher level of training.

If one looks at the enrollment trends over the past three years, one can see women are taking no great steps in changing the tradition from the time of the women dressing from head to toe.

In 1985, female enrollment in Arts and Science was up 5.6 per cent while the male enrolment dropped by 1.4 per cent.

Female enrollment was up in dentistry and graduate studies while male enrol-

ment also dropped in these faculties.

The number of females enrolling in the health professions increased 6.7 per cent while the male enrollment stayed the same.

In management studies, female percentages stayed the same, while the males increased by 2.2 per cent. By interpreting the actual number of students, one finds that only three-sevenths of all Dal faculties are dominated by women.

In the over-all enrollment one finds that there are 482 more women than men yet where are they all being placed? It can be seen that women especially dominate the health professions, which includes such traditional roles as nursing.

The question arises as to where Dalhousie is heading as a university that includes women. What would She think now if She looked around from under her wide-brimmed hat. What's more, what do the women at Dalhousie today think when they look around them?

Black women and feminism

BY ALEXIS PILICHOS

In order to look at feminism one must look at racism, particularly the recognition of Black women in the movement, how they perceive it and what active measures we can take in order to become unified. A look at the Black perspective and the community is necessary in order to establish an understanding of the struggle for Black women.

Black women are rarely mentioned and largely ignored in the feminist movement. If they are mentioned at all it is usually in a negative and marginal way. Black women sense the radical feminist/lesbian movement as wanting to surpass men in equality. White women do not recognize the Black women's oppression and the physical, sexual and historical violence that they have been forced to bear. In fact, Black women are sometimes seen as being passive. In truth, they are just the opposite. They have to rely on tremendous survival techniques and an enormous amount of strength and stamina. Black women have to deal with a double oppression, racial and sexual, and sometimes, a triple oppression, one that includes reference to her low economic status. All women are oppressed, but not equally.

Many feminists claim that all women's experience is the same, which is not true.

Black women and other women of color have different experiences. The aim of all women is the same, that is, equality. Equality particularly in the area of employment for many Black women.

As we can see, as women, do in order to understand and unite all women? There are many ways to overcome and diminish the problems previously mentioned. An obvious way to unite women is to include Black women in the movement. White women must actively include Black women but on their terms. We must be conscious that we live in a racist society. White women must examine their contribution to racism and try to come to terms with it.

One major way we can overcome the ignorance, stereotypes and fear between white and Black women within society in general is to change the white-biased education system. Until recently there has been no mention of any Black history in the school system in Nova Scotia. Black culture is invisible within these institutions undermining their identity. If Black history is taught and if both white and Black students were integrated more, many myths, stereotypes and prejudices would be replaced with understanding.

Both white women and Black women must be able to respect and communicate their differences.