

DALHOUSIE Gazette

AMERICA'S OLDEST COLLEGE NEWSPAPER

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Letter To The Editor

Editor, Dalhousie Gazette:

Permit me to make a few observations about NFCUS, whose continued existence on this campus seems to be endangered. This group, which has swung into prominence during the last ten months, not through its own merits or demerits but through the Russian student exchange question, is currently being subjected to the critical eyes of member universities all across the realm because of the decision they made at the recent conference in Quebec city.

The decision reached by the conference on Russian student exchange was wrong. It was wrong because it was contrary to the mandate issued to NFCUS committees at the majority of the member universities last February. It was wrong because it gave two universities, namely Ottawa and Laval, virtual dictatorial powers.

But underneath all the discussion and behind all the decisions, all was not as wrong as it appeared. The stand taken by Ottawa and Laval gave the conference an opportunity to do something they all wanted to do but could offer no reasons up to that time for doing so.

The fact was, I feel, that the delegates were sick of the whole question. Endless hours of continuous arguing about an issue which if the conference supported would still remain unsettled, since there had been a minimum of preliminary support from the Russian student union had worn the delegates to a state of frustration.

And for all that, the resulting good or benefit which would result from a Russian student exchange would seem hardly worth the trouble when the efforts of the organization could be guided down more constructive channels.

This attitude probably was a major factor in the voting when the conference turned down the Russian student exchange proposals under the ostensible and rather important excuse of preserving NFCUS unity.

If this is so, then it is not so serious that two Universities were able by rather unparliamentary and undemocratic means to control the majority. On a domestic issue or one that would have been of greater benefit to the members of the Federation, I doubt that there would have been such power in such a small majority.

At the same time, NFCUS unity is an important factor assuming that NFCUS can justify its existence. Ottawa and Laval have been strong members of the organization. Geographically and otherwise, they are valuable to the Federation.

If they had actually resigned over the NFCUS issue, the organization might have split up, and, as a result, not only would the Russian student exchange be out of the question, but also much more important matters, such as the abolishment of unemployment insurance for students having seasonal employment would have to be shelved.

However, the matter has now been settled, perhaps temporarily, but the question whether or not Dalhousie should remain in the organization is about to be put to the students in a referendum.

I feel, Mr. Editor, that this would have disastrous effects on the University. It would deprive the students of an opportunity to take part in getting future benefits that are almost certain to accrue through the efforts of the group and it also might deprive the students of a chance to partake in these benefits.

Three of NFCUS'S many accomplishments stand out today. The first of these is the reduction students get in train travel rates during the holiday periods. This reduction, I believe, allows for a return ticket to any destination for two-thirds the regular return fair.

Secondly, there is Canadian University press, which, while not such a tangible benefit, is an excellent means of keeping a cross contact with universities in the rest of the nation. This is an important matter to all students.

Thirdly, there is the more recent regional exchange scholarship. This permits Dalhousie students entering their junior year to go to another university for that year and have another student free from that university come to Dalhousie for a year. This gives students who are interested an opportunity they would not otherwise have were it not for the existence of NFCUS.

- The present aims of the group are as follows:
- Unemployment insurance exemption for seasonal employment of students;
 - National campaign for the investigation and reduction of textbook prices;
 - To implement Massey Commission recommendations.

The possibilities of NFCUS are great. It would be neither right nor logical that one of Canada's leading universities and certainly the Maritimes' leading university should withdraw membership from the Federation.

NFCUS has, in my opinion, more than justified the 20c due annually from each student (which sum is paid by the Students' Council).

I cannot find any reason either in the Quebec conference or anywhere else that could justify Dalhousie withdrawing from NFCUS. The executive of the McGill Student Union supported this recently when they passed a vote of censure against the conference for giving consideration to Laval's and Ottawa's stand but at the same time voted to remain in the Federation.

NOEL GOODRIDGE, Law '53.

Why Universities . . . Just So

Halifax, N. S., Oct. 26, '52.

(Condensed from Sir John Lubbock's "The Pleasures of Life," printed 1842 in U.S.A.)

(Condenser's note—the following is not to be taken too seriously).

A. Non scholae sed vitae discimus. . . .

There is a passage in an address given many years ago by Professor Huxley to the South London Working Men's College, which struck me very much at the time, and which puts this in language more forcible than any which I could use.

"Suppose," he said, "it were perfectly certain that the life and fortune of every one of us would one day or other, depend upon his winning or losing a game of chess. Don't you think that we should all consider it to be a primary duty to learn at least the names and the moves of the pieces? Do you not think that we should look with a disapprobation amounting to scorn upon the father who allowed his son, or the State which allowed its members, to grow up without knowing a pawn from a knight? Yet it is a very plain and elementary truth that the life, the fortune and the happiness of every one of us, and more or less of those who are connected with us, to depend upon our knowing something of the rules of a game infinitely more difficult and complicated than chess. It is a game which has been played for untold ages, every man and woman of us being one of the two players in a game of his or her own. The chessboard is the world, the pieces are the phenomena of the Universe, the rules of the game are what we call the laws of Nature. The player on the other side is hidden from us. We know that his play is always fair, just, and patient. But also we know to our cost that he never overlooks a mistake or makes the smallest allowance for ignorance. To the man who plays well the highest

stakes are paid, with that sort of overflowing generosity which with the strong shows delight in strength. And one who plays ill is checkmated—without haste, but without remorse".

B. Education.

"No pleasure is comparable to the standing upon the vantage ground of truth."—Bacon.

It may seem rather surprising to include education among the pleasures of life; for in too many cases it is made odious to the young, and is supposed to cease with school; while, on the contrary, if it is to be really successful it must be suitable, and therefore interesting, to students, and must last through life. The very process of acquiring knowledge is a privilege and a blessing. It used to be said that there was no royal road to learning; it would be more true to say that avenues heading to it are all royal.

"It is not," says Jeremy Taylor, "the eye that sees the beauties of heaven, nor the ear that hears the sweetness of music, or the glad tidings of a prosperous accident; but the soul that perceives all the relishes of sensual and intellectual perceptions: and the more noble and excellent the soul is, the greater and more savoury are the perceptions.

Herein lies the importance of education. I say education rather than instruction, because it is far more important to cultivate the mind than to store the memory. Studies are a means and not the end. "To spend too much time in studies is sloth; to make judgment wholly by their rules is the humor of a scholar: they perfect nature, and are perfected by experience. Crafty men condemn studies, simple men admire them, and wise men use them."

Our studies should be neither "a couch on which to rest! nor a cloister to promenade alone; nor a tower from which to look down on the others; nor the fortress whence we may resist them; nor a workshop for gain and merchandise; but a rich armory and treasury for the glory of the creator and the ennoblement of life."—Bacon.

C. Art and Science.

Science and Art are sisters, or rather perhaps they are like brother and sister. The mission of Art is in some respects like that of woman. It is not hers so much to do the hard toil and moil of the world, as to surround it with halo of beauty, to convert the work into pleasure.

"You will do the greatest service to the state if you shall raise, not the roofs of the houses, but the souls of the citizens: for it is better that great souls should dwell in small houses rather than for mean slaves to lurk in great houses. . ."—these are the noble words of Epictetus.

Art.
 In Science we naturally expect progress, but in Art the case is not clear. Ruskin says about Art: "High art consists neither in altering, nor in improving nature; but in seeking throughout nature for 'whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are pure,' in loving these, in displaying to the utmost of the painter's power such loveliness as is in them, and directing the thoughts of others to them by winning art, or gentle emphasis. Art is great in exact proportion to the love of beauty shown by the painter, provided that love of beauty forfeit no atom of truth." And "Art helps us to see, and 'hundreds of people can talk for one who can think; but thousands can think for one who can see. To see clearly is poetry, prophecy, and religion all in one. . . Remembering always that there are two characters in which all greatness of Art consists—first, the earnest and intense seizing of natural facts; then the ordering those facts by strength of human intellect, so as to make them, for all who look upon them, to the utmost serviceable, memorable, and beautiful." Science.

Let me quote the glowing description of our debt to science given by Archdeacon Farrar in his address at Liverpool College—testimony, moreover, all the more valuable, considering the source from whence it comes.

"In this great commercial city," he said, "where you are surrounded by the triumphs of science and mechanism—you, whose river is ploughed by the great steamships whose white wake has been called

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