

Policies are elitist...

# Is education accessible?

Accessibility. For most students who are attending university accessibility is not an issue which dominates their thoughts. However, for those who need loans or bursaries or even motivation, access to education is vital.

There are some people who feel that education is a right not a privilege and there are those who feel that education in itself is not a right, but access to that education is.

Students are constantly bombarded with information about tuition fee hikes, taxes on loans, government funding cuts. The reason for this is that these issues are important.

Take for an example the extreme of what could happen.

The Government does not subsidise any education. Education at its most elementary level is accessible only to those who can afford to pay. Those who can not afford to pay, work and attend elementary school only part time. Their thoughts do not even contemplate university as an alternative because it is completely unrealistic. Education becomes more elitist than it already is. Those who are not fortunate enough to have money for more than food, clothing, and shelter never have the opportunity to change the situation that they are in.

Slowly we are regressing towards a time where accessibility is becoming less and less global and more and more elitist. Even at the most rudimentary levels access is limited.

If you attended a private school where

there were classes of twenty students to each one teacher, where you got counselled on your university applications, where everybody knew that they would continue to higher

education then you are the exception, not the rule. If you attended a public school where there were classes of sixty students to each one

teacher, where you had to seek out university applications, where lots of students dropped out as soon as they reached sixteen, then you are lucky to be here.

Accessibility is more than money. The environment you grow up in determines your own expectations of yourself. But making universities more and more financially difficult, does not help.

This week Auditor General Ken Dye criticized the Canadian Student Loan Program (CSLP) because of all their defaulted loans. One of the reasons for the suggested 3 per cent tax on student loans is directly related to that. Why can't they see that those who are most needy to access should not be burdened more.

This year we saw a motion passed that will increase tuition at Dalhousie 25 per cent. What about those who need money to go to school? Now they will need to borrow more and pay back even more than that.

Once out of school those who have borrowed money use their salary they now earn to pay back the government.

One can not help wondering if those four years were spent out in the work force and not in school would you be able to get the same job without the degree and without the financial debt?

So if we continue this way we might end up with future generations who have lots of practical experience and little fundamental knowledge to back it up!

Allison Johnston



Week of Reflection...

## Montreal massacre remembered

by Lisa Coté

This coming Dec. 6 will mark the first anniversary of the "Montréal Massacre" - the day when Marc Lépine killed fourteen women in a campus building at the University of Montréal's engineering school.

The event set off a shockwave of disbelief and anger across the country. Lépine's deliberate targeting of women became a central focus of many commentators and women's organizations.

Some organizers of vigils held in remembrance of the fourteen victims specified they were for women only. The decision to exclude men angered many men and some women, who felt that the exclusion was discriminatory and meant as a punishment to men for an criminal act committed by a lone, deranged madman.

Many refused to believe that Lépine's targeting of women had no special significance. Statistics were quoted illustrating the prevalence of violence against women. They showed that Marc Lépine's crime could not be considered isolated, nor his attitude toward women uncommon.

The response to the Montréal slayings at Dalhousie was much like that of the rest of the country; one of shock, disbelief, and revulsion.

This initial reaction, after exams and Christmas had passed, shifted to an acute concern about the nature of Lépine's crime as a violent crime against women, and its relation to all the other kinds of violence directed at women every day in Canada. This led to a further and perhaps more fundamental question; What kinds of attitudes underlie these acts of violence against women and how can we change them?

Before exams and Christmas last year, Rick Hand, then a Media Relations Officer at the Public Relations Office at Dalhousie, recognized the need for a thoughtful and rigorous response to the Montréal Massacre. After the holidays, he and several other public relations officers from Halifax campuses formed a general committee to deal with the issue.

Soon members of women's groups and other concerned parties joined the committee.

The idea was developed for an annual "Week of Reflection", during which the victims of the Montréal Massacre could be remembered and mourned. The larger issues of violence against women, discrimination, and all other forms of sexism could also be addressed.

The first "Week of Reflection" was held at Dalhousie in January of last year. Through the CFS

(Canadian Federation of Students), the event caught on and this year will be honoured in campuses across Canada.

At Dalhousie, this year's Week of Reflection starts next week on Nov. 13, and runs until Sunday Nov. 18. Events have been organized by the newly-formed Dalhousie Women's Group. They range from a workshop on self-defence tactics for women to an "open mike" session in the Green Room that will include poetry readings.

Members of the Women's Group say they have tried not to focus solely on violence against women, but rather to cover a range of women's issues including discrimination women experience on university campuses, and the extra burden of racism for women of colour.

The Dalhousie Women's Group is open to anyone interested in women's issues, and meets every week in the SUB on alternating Tuesdays or Wednesdays. The first meeting of the group was held

this fall. Since then members have been busy organizing for Week of Reflection. The main goals of the group are to raise awareness about women's issues, especially those relating to women on campus, and to change negative attitudes toward women.

The group would also like to become a source of support for women on campus by providing a non-threatening atmosphere in which women can express their feelings and thoughts about being a woman.

### Week of Reflection - Schedule of Events -

Tues. Nov. 13

**Dal Theatre Student Society**

Performance for Week of Reflection

3:30 Script Library

5th floor Dal Arts Centre

**"Not A Love Story"**

film and discussion about pornography

7:30 Rm. 307 Dal SUB

Wed. Nov. 14

**Betsy Warland, Poet & Writer**

Readings from *Proper Definitions*

Women's Studies Seminar

3:30 Multidisciplinary Centre,

1444 Seymour St.

**"Ain't I A Woman"**

An evening exploring the issues facing African Canadian women

7:15 Rm. 224 Dal SUB

Thurs. Nov. 15

**Dal Theatre Student Society**

Performance for Week of Reflection

5:00 Script Library 5th floor Dal

Arts Centre

Fri. Nov. 16

**"Women At The Front (of the classroom)"**

A round table discussion with women in academia

3:30 Poli. Sci. Lounge, 3rd floor

A&A

Sat. Nov. 17

**"Practical Self Defense For Women"**

1:00 Rm. 316 Dal SUB

Sun. Nov. 18

**"Poetry & Song: Reflection on Violence Against Women"**

Performances followed by open

mike

1:00 Green Room, Dal SUB

Thurs. Nov. 22

**"Our Generation & Gender"**

Women and Men of the '90s

personally affecting change

7:00 Rm. 224 Dal SUB

Look for other events in your

Society or Departments

Visit the Dal Women's Group

table in the SUB Lobby or

Tupper Link

**Week of Reflection**

Discussion and Debate on the

Issues of Women, Men and

Violence.

November 12-18