

# you were saying . . .

## Exams unfair to students

To the Editor:

Are exams really an equitable measure of a person's overall knowledge of a subject? No, they're certainly not!

Well, Christmas exams are only a few weeks away and all students are getting those pre-exam jitters. There is not a single student that escapes these pressures. Some students feel these more than others and rightly so. There are those, though, who are doing extremely well in their courses right now. Will they be able to say this after exams are over? I'm one of those that will have to answer "No."

Exams have always been one of my worst enemies. They're also enemies to a lot of my peers. No matter how much I study I still cannot seem to do that well. I'm not afraid of exams but they damage the marks that I've worked so hard for.

I want someone to explain to me why it is fair that a student can fail a subject, after months of hard work, in a few hours.

Yours sincerely,  
Jeff Harrington

## Fire alarms annoy, upset

To the Editor:

Fire alarms have become a definite problem at both Shirreff and Howe Hall this year. Beginning in early September, they have become so numerous that they are not only becoming a nuisance, but could prove to be a hazard rather than a safety measure.

Fire drills have occurred at all hours, and as frequently as three times a day. It is acceptable, especially during the first few weeks of the academic year, to have one or two in order to acquaint the residents with the procedures to follow in the event of fire; however, it is unnecessary to repeat them as frequently as they have been occurring in the past months.

The general consensus is that the frequent drills are a result of small insects known as silver fish entering the alarm system, their presence somehow causing the alarm to ring. The plausibility of this explanation is questionable, but it is the only one that has been offered.

The fire alarms are quickly losing their effectiveness, particularly on rainy days or in the middle of the night. Many residents no longer bother to close the windows, turn on the lights, and leave the building, as the rules concerning procedure in case of fire dictate. This lack of response to the fire alarm could be fatal if a fire actually did occur, as these same people would, by ignoring the alarm, be oblivious to the danger at hand. A further example of this is that during the Halloween dance at Shirreff Hall, the fire alarm rang. A state of total confusion resulted, not only due to the large number of people in the dining hall, but due to the fact that fire alarms are so commonplace that no one was really concerned with getting out. It is a situation similar to the story about the boy who cried wolf. The story is old, but the moral is still pertinent.

The entire situation involving fire drills is becoming monotonous, and more important, dangerous. Something must be done before the situation becomes entirely out of hand, and before the dangers resulting from the frequent drills become all too real.

Sincerely,  
Cathy Atkinson

## Thoughts on pornography

To the Editor:

**From the Mount:** In lieu of Dr. As's superb lecture series offered at the Mount, I think it is appropriate to lend some support to an issue that affects primarily women.

**The amended laws on pornography are about to be tabled before the House, i.e. in the next session.** Recent research has shown a direct correlation between sexual callousness toward women and exposure to pornography. In an article entitled "Pornography, Sexual Callousness, and the Trivialization of Rape", they report the following: Pornography appears to thrive on featuring social encounters in which women are eager to accommodate any and every imaginable sexual urge of any man in the vicinity. These socially non-discriminating females are typically shown to encourage and actively solicit the specific sexual behaviours that are dear to men, not necessarily to women: "...in a vital part of what has been referred to as 'male sexual fantasy', women are portrayed as hysterically euphoric in

response to just about any sexual and pseudosexual stimulation they receive at the hands of 'male magicians'." The article goes on to say that: "...women take the brunt of this type of pornography-inspired experimentation. Men were found to have made women comply with their requests to try what had been seen. Requests tended to be backed by brute force, and many women reported feelings of degradation and humiliation..."

Exposure made rape appear trivial and this apparent loss of compassion for women as rape victims, occasioned by massive exposure to pornography, generalizes to a loss of compassion for women per se, thus undermining supportive dispositions for women's causes. The findings are suggestive of further anti-social consequences in that those massively exposed will become distrusting of their partners in that women are portrayed to be socially undiscriminating and hysterical about any kind of sexual stimulation. Distrust grows and caring diminishes and the thing called love is undermined.

As well as fostering inappropriate perceptions and unwarranted dispositions because it is legitimized by lack of censure, and that no one in authority objects to it, this stimulates the process of legitimization. While it is men, also, that succumb to the suggestion of hyper-euphoria, the sexual techniques produce disappointment and dissatisfaction. Blame is likely to be placed, conflict is likely to result and women are likely to take the brunt of the onslaught.

IN SUPPORT OF THE AMENDED LEGISLATION TO INCLUDE THE WORD 'DEGRADING' AND TERMS 'ANY MATERIAL OR THING' write either:-

- Justice Minister Mark McQuiggan

House of Commons

Rm. 209, Confederation Bldg.

Ottawa, K1A 0A6

- or -

- The Canadian Coalition Against Media Pornography

P.O. Box 1065, Station B

Ottawa, Ontario K1P 5R1

Toronto, Ontario

R. Smith  
Halifax

## Reader supports spraying

To the Editor:

The continuation of anti-spray lobbying by groups such as the Cape Breton landowners, led by Elizabeth May in the face of their recent court defeat, prompted me to express my knowledge of the issue. Having worked with the newly formed Toxic Substances Branch of Environment New Brunswick for three consecutive summers I gained an objective insight into the application of such herbicides. By inspecting herbicide spray operations over three spraying seasons, both by aerial and ground monitoring which totalled several hundred hours, I feel I have a sufficient basis for argument.

To stay competitive in an almost exclusively softwood market, forest companies resort to clearing large areas of land of hardwoods after logging operations have harvested all softwoods. During the first few years after planting new softwood seedlings, these plantations also have pincherry, alders, pine and other hardwoods competing for nutrients and sunlight.

Secondly, the factual basis for the arguments of the Cape Breton landowners was largely generated in the press, not the scientific community. In court they argued that the forestry herbicide, 2,4,5-T, contained dioxin (TCDD), a chemical which was made infamous by the high levels present in the Vietnam era defoliant Agent Orange. Continued reference to dioxin and Agent Orange is unjustified in their arguments given that the contamination levels in the herbicides are well below the 0.1 ppm known to be present 15 years ago. I have personally supervised water sampling just outside and downstream of spray areas with never any significant levels of 2,4,5-T or dioxin contamination (sensitivity levels of such tests conducted in Ottawa are refined to parts per trillion concentrations). Referring back to the court case which I attended during the plaintiff's summations, I was disheartened to note their complete ignorance of these facts.

Thirdly, in comparing debates occurring now in Nova Scotia to my experiences with organizations in New Brunswick, such as the Concerned Parents, I see a similar, almost reflex, distrust of large, independently-owned forest companies which spray these chemicals. It seems irrelevant to these people that similar herbicides with the same emulsifiers are applied on agricultural lands right next to residential properties, where no 3.2 km buffer zone is required and where children could

be directly exposed to the chemical spray.

Lastly, the public pressure in Nova Scotia by anti-spray groups has resulted in the discontinuation of aerial herbicide spraying while ground spraying is still allowed. This would appear to be reducing chemical drifting but it is well known by government and private applicators that the use of aircraft, especially helicopters, results in an accurate application with much less susceptibility to drift caused by winds.

My concern in writing this letter is not to criticize parents naturally concerned about spray operations in their areas, but to see that herbicide complainants are not misdirected in their attempts at reducing the health risks of Nova Scotians to pesticides. By altering perspectives slightly they should demand that proper funding be made available for the adequate monitoring of spray operations so as to ensure that government-approved habitation and watercourse setbacks in spray areas are not ignored. With a regular inspection program during herbicide spraying, and the reapproval of aerial application in forestry plantations, risk to the general public would be negligible.

Mark D'Arcy  
Medicine I

## Is anyone listening there?

To the Editor:

Does anyone at the Gazette listen to its readers? Despite numerous letters of complaint, the paper continues to publish articles and editorials whose sole effect, it seems, is to lend credibility to the popular belief that the Gazette is a "pinko rag" undeserving of any serious attention.

Don't misunderstand me. I'm not defending Ronald Reagan. I'm not denying that the nuclear build-up on both sides is dangerous. I'm not suggesting that we shouldn't be frightened. But there are limits to the benefits of constantly finding fault. We know that there are huge problems in the world. To drone on about them in alarmist, cynical, and (worst of all) cliched terms serves only to alienate the majority of your audience and convince the rest that the situation is completely hopeless.

We are not living in an era which needs to be shocked into realizing that there is evil in the world. We are instead in an era which has been numbed by constant reminders of the world's evils. Surely the purpose of editorials today, whether leftist or rightist, should be to point some way out of the chaos, not to wallow in it. To re-state ad nauseum that our civilization is far from perfect is hardly an adequate substitute for a rational consideration of possible solutions.

It isn't good journalism—it isn't even good propaganda. If, as it appears, the purpose of the Gazette is to motivate its readers, why does it continue on a course which incurs only their hostility? As Lennon & McCartney put it, "If you go carrying pictures of Chairman Mao / You ain't gonna make it with anyone anyhow."

I fully recognize and respect your right to print whatever you choose. But consider this—if no-one's listening, what's the point?

Yours,  
Stephen Bolton

## Stop the communists

Madame Editor:

Charles Spurr is a Communist actively promoting Communist principles and ideology through time-honoured methods of propaganda. The *Dalhousie Gazette* (10,000 circulation) has become a vehicle for Mr. Spurr to circulate Communist misinformation at no charge to him or his party, and you and the Gazette publishing board are responsible.

Mr. Spurr, however, is not listed in the new Dal Student Directory. Is he a student here at Dal? If not, then his letters should not be published and he should not be on the Gazette staff.

Canada's oldest college newspaper should not be an unlimited forum for Communist propaganda.

Sincerely,  
Hugh Paton  
4th Year Commerce Student

Editor's note: The Gazette does not censor letters unless they are sexist or racist in content. Spurr's or yours. Also, part-time Dal students are not listed in the directory. Keep checking your facts.