

Cuts in context

It has become a Dalhousie tradition. At least once a term, Howard Clark manages to focus the anger of a sizeable portion of the university community on himself. As much as his pronouncements — whether on tuition fee hikes, salary freezes or program cuts — have the ring of crisis management to most ears, he invariably attempts to present them as part of his "vision" for Dalhousie.

Under the usual pattern, most people scoff at the idea that he even has a vision, figuring that at bottom he's nothing more than a cost-cutter who wants to balance the books regardless of who he has to trample to do it (as long as it's not him or his entourage). Certainly there's nothing visionary about the series of fee increases we've seen in recent years.

Although I've been there at most of the rallies when Clark-hunting season has come around in the past few semesters, I've usually resisted the inclination of some of the student radical types to portray all the evil as his doing. I've always imagined a court of like-minded, high-level advisers developing a plan to reduce the budget deficit while at the same time trying to sell it, out of necessity, as a constructive exercise.

For the first time, however, the opponents of the latest round of proposed cuts to fine arts programs have convinced me that there's something else at work. The evidence, as they say in the movies, is circumstantial, but it's very convincing. In short, the ideology which motivates the President and a whole class of movers and shakers in the education system in Nova Scotia is being more clearly exposed than ever before.

Point number one to remember is that Clark is a chemist. He has made it abundantly clear in the past eight days that personally, he has no conception of the importance of the fine arts in a university education. He has gone to great lengths to depict the visual and performing arts as intellectual ghettos, irrelevant to the other disciplines within the humanities. In fact, this is an arbitrary distinction — music and theatre are as important to the world's cultural tradition as the fields of literature and history, and inseparable from them.

There are still more smoke and mirrors to watch out for, however. In all likelihood, the cuts to the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences have not ended — it is anybody's guess what will be next on the chopping block, but it's a good bet the so-called 'liberal arts' won't remain untouched.

The rationalization approach to cutting costs by eliminating programmes offered at other provincial universities has also been exposed as a sham. Nothing illustrates this better than the case of the Costume Studies programme, unique in Canada but dispensable in Clark's world view.

As well, despite the much-heralded reference in Dalhousie's mission statement to the university's "community service" role, it has clearly been decided that Dalhousie's central place in the cultural community of Halifax and the Maritimes is not part of that role.

What we are left with is a school that is increasingly for scientists and technocrats, serving the community in their own particular way. And in ways too numerous to describe here, this is a national trend. Sounds paranoid, I know. But watch for it.

Ryan Stanley

Clark's vision rejected

An open letter to Dr. Howard C. Clark, President and Vice-Chancellor of Dalhousie University:
Sir:

I am writing this letter in response to your remarks September 22 at the open university meeting.

As a student of music, as an artist, citizen for twenty-one years of Halifax and moreover a thinking human being I feel compelled to provide you with a response to your arguments.

I believe, sir, that you have, from the beginning of your tenure, misused the position of President and Vice-Chancellor of Dalhousie University. Furthermore, you have erred in your understanding of Dalhousie University's, and, indeed, any intellectual community's chief end.

It is not your right nor your privilege to be our leader. All manifestations of power as have been demonstrated by you (two examples of which I detail below) are ill-placed and illegitimate.

Dalhousie News. In it one finds your three columns, your picture, your signature, a headline and a bold-face sentence of sage-wisdom attributed to yourself. Why do you so carefully construct your image? A picture. A signature; the great seal of your vanity. Why must we endure these prophecies and visions of

yours? Schopenhauer writes: 'Pride is an established conviction of one's own paramount worth in some particular respect; while vanity is the desire of rousing such a conviction in others. Pride works from within; it is the direct appreciation of oneself. Vanity is the desire to arrive at this appreciation indirectly, from without.'

The blossoming of the bureaucracy. The presence of four vice-presidents, one associate vice-president and numerous directors, executive and otherwise, is interesting. So too, I might add, is the appointment of your wife as Assistant to the President. Why do these positions exist? Are they central to the mission of Dalhousie as a national university? I suspect not. I submit, however, that they are central to your game of assumed power and influence. Who can help but be impressed by the sheer numbers of lesser nobles, dukes duchesses, counts and countesses? Of course the recruitment of deputies is a time-honoured practice among those who rely on back-room deals and, ultimately, force to assert their will. But a President and Vice-Chancellor?

You believe the University must be relevant, adaptable to a world which, daily, is changing. This is false. Ours is not to determine needs and fill them.

Ours is not to reflect society. Ours is not to be relevant. The nature of original thought is that it is original, unpredictable in its form and hence irrelevant to the times in particular.

A university of 1993 is fundamentally equivalent to a university of 1293. It is a community of human beings dedicated to the study of everything. This ideal is worthwhile. Indeed, it is necessary. Our position of strength derives from the sure knowledge that the broad-minded and generous spirit of university life is worthy of respect and defense. Sir, your presentation on Wednesday tactlessly proposed the abolishment of this ideal. And you presumed to understand certain ill-defined needs. You have presumed knowledge of the future. You have presumed too much.

Sir, please descend from your self-constructed podium. Please refrain from self-aggrandisement. Understand that only a broad-based community of thinkers can possibly contribute to man's society. Understand that financial analysts have no place tampering with the cornerstone of society: free and productive thought. Understand that you have no place interpreting, let alone acting upon, financial analysis.

James Calkin



LETTERS

The *Dalhousie Gazette* welcomes letters to the editor. Letters should not exceed 300 words in length and should be typed and double-spaced. The deadline for letters is Monday noon before publication. Letters may be submitted on Macintosh or IBM-compatible 3.5" disk.

Who's abusive?

To the editor:

I am writing as the Dalhousie Student Union representative for Eliza Ritchie Hall and also as a member of the 1993-94 Eliza Ritchie Hall Frosh Squad. I write this letter as a formal acknowledgement of the hard work of the Frosh Week organisers and volunteers whose combined effort made for what would seem to be the most successful Frosh Week in recent years.

What I deem truly "successful" about the week were the compromises between the Administration, the DSU, the Residence Councils, House Councils, Residence Assistants, volunteers from both residences and off-campus, Societies, and many others whose roles I may have missed. These parties must come to an amiable agreement each year as to what shape Frosh Week will take.

Some groups argue for tradition while others argue against any abusive behaviour present in Frosh Week. Most arguments fall between these two poles. To reconcile these views is a difficult task since it requires that compromises be accepted by all concerned.

The ability of the Frosh Squads involved to work within the compromises made has been continually refined over the past several years. Speaking on behalf of Eliza Ritchie, no serious breaches of conduct were committed during the week to my knowledge, and I can guarantee that if any did occur, that they were either accidental or incidental.

I therefore do not believe that the criticism of these Frosh squads, and all involved in Frosh week, was fully warranted in the opinion piece co-written

by Sandra MacDonald and Candida Rifkind (*Gazette*, September 16).

I was impressed with the writers' wit, but as I read I became more and more sensitive to the cutting quips directed at Frosh Squads. By insulting and demeaning the volunteers of Frosh Squad, the writers are abusing students of Dalhousie, while at the same time condemning similar "abuse" in Frosh week.

Frosh week is playacting for Frosh Squad. By now all Frosh should have recognized it as such. Thus, I assume that activities during Frosh week must have been viewed out of context, above an interpersonal level. It is imperative to guard against such rash observations, especially at Dalhousie. Let us see not with but our eyes but with our hearts and minds also.

Drew Campbell
DSU Rep Eliza Ritchie Hall

Save arts!

To the editor:

On September 22, President Howard Clark announced that he is making a recommendation to the Board of Governors to cut the Theatre, Costume Studies, and Public Administration programs at Dalhousie. The faculty, staff, and students in the audience listened in shock as President Clark told us that, despite the "major loss" that will be suffered by the university, these programs will be sacrificed because they do not attract large amounts of private or government funding, and are not "vital to the liberal arts core" of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences.

We in the Costume Studies program

want the university community to be aware of what the decision to cut our program means. It means that Dalhousie will lose its unique position as the only post-secondary institution in North America that provides a program of combined academic study and hands-on experience for costumers. It means that Dalhousie will no longer be known internationally as a place for costumers to study their art, and as a place for theatres, museums, film companies, and other cultural organizations to look for skilled costuming staff. It means that we will no longer be contributing to a growing, vibrant academic field.

These cuts are senseless. The saving to the university is a very small percentage of its budget, but the loss to the arts community in Canada and the regional economy is huge. Nova Scotia has the fastest growing film industry in Canada. In 1987, Nova Scotia took in \$16 million in taxation of cultural goods and services. Dalhousie graduates work across Canada in every sort of venue from small community theatres to big budget films, and overseas. Graduates of the Costume Studies program comprise over one-third of the wardrobe department at Stratford.

By cutting these programs, President Clark will be cutting off the creative lifeblood of this key sector of the Nova Scotia economy and contributing to the decline of the artistic communities in Canada which are already struggling. Please, we urge all students to protest the impending elimination of our program, and the other programs singled out by President Clark. Tell people about the cuts. Call your MP and the Minister of Education, John MacEachern (424-4236). Write a letter to President Howard

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