

Bureaucratic burden discourages prosecution

If you are a student at Dalhousie, there is a good chance that you can successfully plagiarize your way through university. Unless your professor can prove that you "intended" to "present the work of another author, in such a way as to give (your) reader reason to think that the other author's work is (your) own"¹, you cannot be found guilty of plagiarism.

That is the message the Senate delivered on January 23rd when it defeated Professor Edwin Belzer's motion that would have required the Senate Discipline Committee to disregard a student's "intent" to commit plagiarism in determining "whether an alleged act of plagiarism in fact occurred".

Plagiarism, as all students ought to know, is the big taboo. To commit plagiarism is to put at risk the continuation of one's academic career. Professors often fail students who plagiarize, and when they choose to forward a

student's case to the university administration, the student is often expelled.

However, at Dalhousie, you will be a member of an elite group if you are expelled for plagiarism (the Senate discipline committee has heard on 15 cases since January 1985). In fact, if you are suspected of plagiarism, chances are you will never appear before the discipline committee.

As Belzer points out, trying to prove intent can be a painful experience. Professors who choose to do so often meet with resistance from their colleagues and face many extra hours of research to support their case. One professor spent sixty to seventy hours researching such a case and described the experience as "extremely unpleasant".

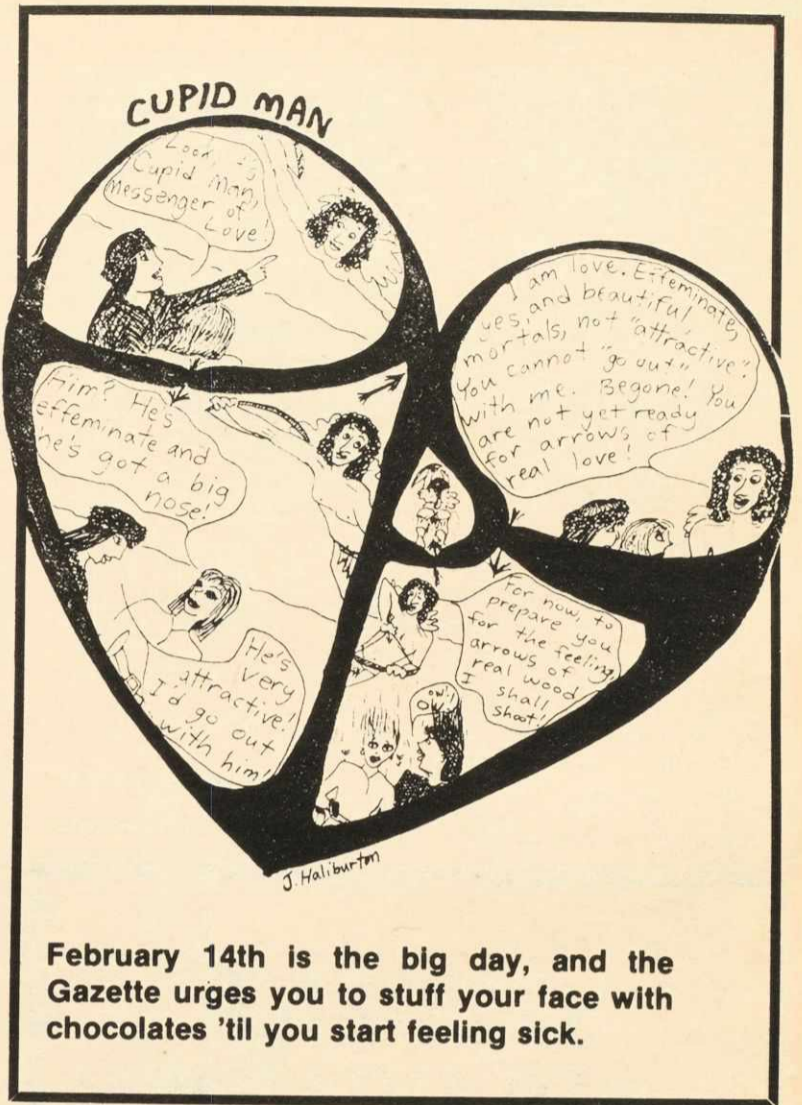
Professors are aware of the barriers they will face if they tackle such a case, and most opt to "assess penalties on their own when this is the job of the Senate Discipline Committee." Because the professors are dealing privately with students who plagiarize,

many students simply fail individual assignments or courses only to go on and commit plagiarism again.

This being the case, Belzer's objective, i.e. to reduce the amount of plagiarism at Dal by removing the "intent" requirement, is commendable. However, it seems odd that he should find need to forward such a motion. Plagiarism, as it is defined in the Dalhousie Undergraduate Calendar, is not an act of intent.

If the objective is to eliminate plagiarism and not (specifically) intended plagiarism, then the Senate Discipline Committee ought to pass judgements on plagiarism cases that adhere to the definition of plagiarism as outlined in the calendar. After all, students agree to adhere to that definition when they register for classes at Dal. Any student guilty of plagiarism who is judged solely on the basis of their intent to plagiarize is simply being given a lucky break they do not necessarily deserve.

Michael Thompson



February 14th is the big day, and the Gazette urges you to stuff your face with chocolates 'til you start feeling sick.

¹ Undergraduate Calendar, Dalhousie University, 1988-89, p. 17.

Letters

Body heat

To the Editors:

It was really frustrating to read a recent article in the Gazette concerning the upcoming athletic referendum. Since the initiation of the referendum, the student union has been "clouding" the real issues by using it as a bargaining tool for the tuition fee agreement, and more recently, the strike refunds. Our student union president blames the administration for clouding the issues of last year's referendum. It is important

programs which have been vastly upgraded (eg. intramural programs, new wooden floor in Dalplex, modern expanded weights facility etc., etc.)

The student union should be presenting the athletic referendum as a single issue and should be trying to advance the interests of the student body.

Kathy MacCormack

'Fit few' a falsity

To the Editors:

I would like to take this opportunity to clarify some generalities made in last week's article "Fee Referendum heads for tough negotiations" by Lorna Irons.

Specifically, I am very con-

the student union has been "clouding" the real issues. . .

cerned about the basis for a statement contained within that article. The statement reads, "The Student Union says that all students should benefit from the fee, rather than the few who regularly use the recreation facilities". It would have been very informative if the author had included the research figures which support this claim.

Careful research done recently on the use of recreational facilities by students shows that, in fact, quite the opposite is true. A majority of students not only approved the athletic fee but continue to actively make use of the recreational services it provides. The fact that the services have been adjusted to more accurately meet the needs of the student population has increased frequency of use in recent years.

This year the revamped Intramurals program has involved a great many students. Approximately 1420 students participate regularly in co-ed intramural sports, while 2490 are registered for men's and women's

intramural activities.

In addition to utilizing the intramural programs many students enjoy individual recreational activities. During the week of January 22 to 28 for example, approximately 4489 student visits were recorded at Dalplex. These students accessed the many recreation services offered by one of the largest fitness centres in eastern Canada. These figures did not include those students who make use of Studley Gymnasium and the Dalhousie Arena or the

thousands who attend free admission to varsity games.

In conclusion, accurate statistics show that it is not "the few" but the majority, and an ever increasing majority, who are benefiting personally from the services offered through Dal's recreational facilities.



The students of Dalhousie are aware of their needs for intellectual as well as physical well-being. The current trend, in our

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