

# Surplus of teachers frightening statistic

by Heather Myers

Statistics Canada projections indicate elementary school enrollment will decline until 1981, at which time it will start rising slightly until in 1986-87 it reaches its 1976 level, still well below what it was in the sixties and early seventies. Figures for secondary school enrollment predict a steady decrease from now until it levels out in 1986-87. The obvious conclusion is that there will be fewer jobs for teachers in Canada.

The surplus of teachers locally is staggering. Out of 1076 applications for 1978-79, the Halifax School Board was able to place 100, and many of these were special education, music, or French teachers. The Dartmouth School Board hasn't hired any elementary school teachers for two years, and was only able to place about a dozen of its 900 applicants last September. Asked how many applications they had on file, Halifax County School Board said they didn't keep records, but they had "a whole cabinet full."

Given such a gloomy prognosis, it has been suggested that education departments should feel some responsibility for job placement. Asked about this, Barry Sullivan, a student in the Dal programme, and Barbara Wal-

lace-Pressé, B.Ed. student at the Mount, felt professors' duty consisted of no more than help with resumés and emphatic warnings about job scarcity. After all, Sullivan said, "no other department at the university takes on this responsibility."

Dal B.Ed. co-ordinator Dewolf says the bleak job situation is made clear to students. They do not "lure people under false pretenses."

Dr. MacMillan, Chairman of Saint Mary's education department, says St. Mary's spends "really a lot of time" on job placement, organizing resumés and interviews, and supplying their graduates with addresses of School Boards all over the country and outside Canada.

The aim, with a greater academic emphasis than other B.Ed. programmes, is to produce thinkers as much as teachers. But Dewolf added that the drop in undergraduate enrollment was being taken "quite seriously" and that changes were being considered in recognition of the current preference for "useful" courses.

Both the Mount and Saint Mary's programmes include two months mandatory practice-teaching, one in the fall and one in the spring.

In addition to methods instruction, the Saint Mary's B.Ed. programme prepares its

students for the first practice-teaching session, through informal meetings in which more mundane but useful hints are offered. The theme of these gatherings is, as one student puts it, "survival in the school situation."

In the opinion of Barbara Wallace-Pressé, students would prefer even more instruction in their field of specialization. She says most agree that methods are really learned through practice.

Wallace-Pressé said that, while some students see the B.Ed. programme as good preparation for other careers

and for raising their own children, their main reason for taking a degree in education is undoubtedly that they want to teach.

The problem of declining enrollment and debates over what preparation for teaching should involve will inevitably affect B.Ed. students. But these are only two out of a multitude of issues that emerge when one talks to students and educators. More questions about B.Ed. programmes specifically arise: whether a year is enough time to accomplish anything, and whether the practice-teaching

situation is realistic enough to be valuable.

Larger questions about the social and political functions of schooling and about our expectations of institutionalized education appear. The field contains many questions and no ready answers.

Dalhousie, with its academic emphasis, may be the best place to study the more profound aspects of education. But, for those wanting certification and lots of practice at what they hope to do for a living, Dalhousie is not the place to go.

## B.ed Program not practical

by Heather Myers

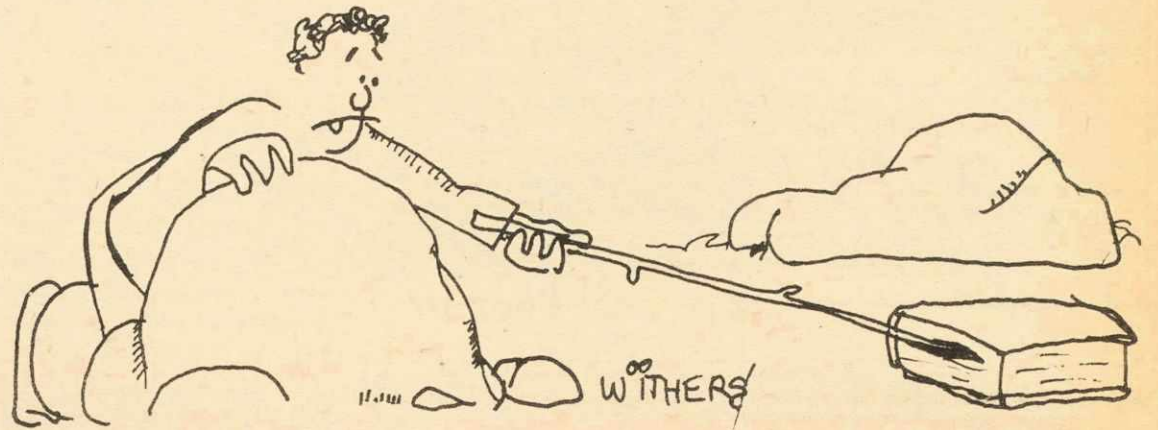
Complaints that a poor balance between practical and theoretical content exists in Dalhousie's Bachelor of Education programme along with a lack of sensitivity in the Department to the tight job situation facing graduates, may account for the drop in enrollment from 113 students last year to 61 this year. The decline at Saint Mary's and Mount Saint Vincent, which offer more practical programs, is negligible in comparison to Dalhousie's.

Dalhousie's is a "very theoretical" course, says former student Lisa Underwood.

She said last year's class included many who were not happy with the programme. In response to a survey conducted by the department, students said they were not getting enough practice-teaching to feel confident in the classroom, and they had to spend too much time writing papers, Underwood said.

One student, Barry Sullivan, feels the charges are not justified. He chose Dalhousie's programme because he thought it better balanced than either Mount Saint Vincent's or Saint Mary's, that three weeks practice-teaching with the option (taken by most) of three more is adequate, and that Dalhousie is superior too because it offers the only courses in Canadian Studies, a field that is now compulsory in Nova Scotian high schools.

Mark Dewolf, co-ordinator of the programme at Dalhousie, says neither the emphasis of the programme, nor the function of the department as a whole is unanimously agreed on among faculty. He said however, that the department regards itself as "not solely a training institution, but an academic university department that does not assume all people take B.Ed.'s with classroom teaching in mind."



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