

Four million dollar joke

As students in the nineties we are constantly under attack for lacking the fighting force of the generation only three decades before us. We have all heard endless stories about the 1960s and the dedication that generation put into voicing their beliefs and concerns, and the contagious buzz that went along with these issues.

At Dalhousie University, there are many issues that should be of concern to students, but remain conveniently locked behind closed doors by the university's administration, or more often, the president of this university, Dr. Tom Traves.

But, for the past few weeks there has been a buzz going around school concerning one issue which isn't being taken smoothly by both professors and students — the Banner System. These concerns are going to take the people at the top on a long and bumpy ride.

Many of us have been kept in the dark about this new system, and for those of us who have heard about it, it has been glamorized as a stepping stone to the next millennium. It is an administrative information system which will be used to organize information about Dalhousie, such as student's academic records.

The system was bought with a price tag of two million dollars. The purchase was made before the Banner System came to Senate on November 10th, 1997. Like many of the decisions at this university, it lacked the approval of both professors and students, although we are told it is us who it will most directly affect.

The main problem with the system is that is only compatible for half year courses. Instead of dishing out the extra money to allow for full year credits, a decision has been made to abolish them.

This change in the university calendar will come into effect in the fall of 1999, conveniently leaving us little time to dispute the decision, since the process of changing

programs, students, employees, alumni and finances, it will affect all of us". But none of us were given the chance to dispute eliminating full year classes, which are an excellent opportunity to learn a subject, thoroughly.

Having talked to professors and students at this university, there is a common feeling that there are some subjects which cannot be adequately learned within a three month chunk.

Traves, as president of Dalhousie, should be aware of this insofar as it is hurting academics, but his concerns are elsewhere.

He has emphasized that the Banner System will allow us to communicate with a small number of Canadian universities who have the same system. But, the number of universities who have the same system is in the minority. Furthermore, instead of thinking of communications with other schools, Traves should be thinking about the lack of communication within his own school. I'm quite sure we could all think of a better way to spend four million dollars, without subsequently hurting our academic curriculum.

It's about time Traves realizes that we are aware and care about Dalhousie University, despite his efforts to keep us out of important decision making. We are the ones who make this school what it is and we are not about to let him shove this spirit aside. This is not to say that we should all put flowers in our hair, crank Bob Dylan and march up to Traves's office in protest, but I'm sure we have a voice just as strong and it's about time it's heard.

AMBER MACARTHUR

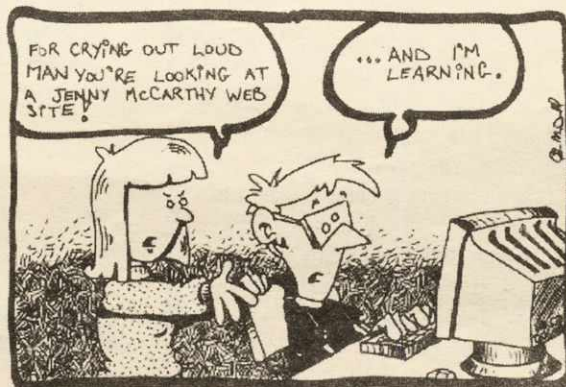
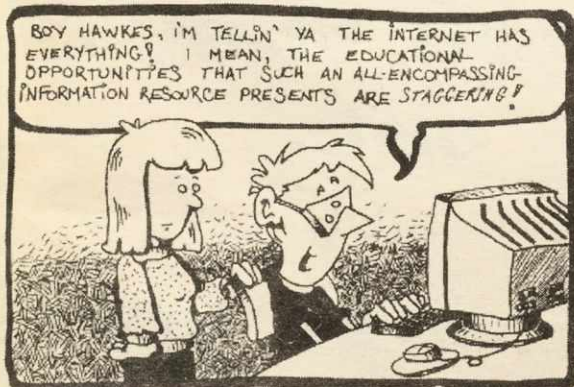
Editorial

course outlines will have to start immediately. And since the system has already been bought, returning it is not an option. This leaves us with one important question — Why isn't the president working for the students and professors?

It seems as if Traves is absorbed in pleasing only a handful of people. As the president of Dalhousie he has done little to make this university a better place for academics, but instead has only maintained one position — that he alone has the power and knowledge to decide on issues that will affect thousands.

I think it's about time that Traves, and the handful of people who run Dalhousie, understand that we, as the masses, deserve a lot more respect. We are the ones directly losing out with this new system, which will cut our courses right down the middle.

Acting VP Warwick Kimmins, addresses the effects of the Banner System saying that, "Insofar as it will store, manage and make available information about the university's



THE DALHOUSIE GAZETTE

editorial board

Vol. 130 No. 11

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The Gazette welcomes letters to the editor and commentary. All letters will be printed up to four per week. The printing of additional letters will be at the discretion of the Opinions Editor. Letters may be edited for length above 300 words and we reserve the right to edit commentary.

All submissions must be typed double-spaced on paper, e-mailed, or on a Mac or IBM 3 1/2 inch disk, in a WP version not greater than Word 6.0 or equivalent. The deadline is Mondays at 4:30 p.m.

Founded in 1869 at Dalhousie College, the Gazette is Canada's oldest student newspaper. With a circulation of 10,000, the Gazette is published every Thursday by the Dalhousie Gazette Publishing Society, of which all students of Dalhousie University are members. The Gazette exercises full editorial autonomy and reserves the right to refuse or edit any material submitted. All editorial decisions are made collectively by the staff. To become voting staff members, individuals must contribute to three issues. Views expressed in the Gazette are not necessarily those of the editors or the collective staff. Unless otherwise noted, all text © 1997 the Dalhousie Gazette Publishing Society. ISSN 0011-5819

Letters

TA Living

To the editor,

It's getting boring here on the bottom floor of the Life Sciences Centre. As you know, I became acquainted with the place when I taught part-time for Dalhousie a few years ago. Right now, since I'm unemployed and broke, it seemed like a good place to stay for the night. With a beard you look like a tenured professor, and you can always tell the security guard that you are working late.

It is admittedly a bit difficult explaining away the shopping cart with all my worldly possessions, but since most of these possessions consist of course outlines of subjects taught at various universities, I usually get away with it. Sometimes I think that even the security guards can't be bothered to try to find the entrance to the building again, just for the purpose of expelling me.

Anyway, as you can gather, I am trying to do my best to save the last \$2,500 they paid me to teach a half-credit course at the Mount. This has been hard to do, and I must confess that I am now down to the last \$90 or so, which is supposed to be set aside — according to the designation on my salary slip — as vacation pay.

I am tempted to blow the whole thing for a half-a-night vacation at

the Sheraton (or just go into the casino for half an hour). I know I can't do this, and instead I spend my time dreaming that I have all the perks of a real professor — pension plan, medical insurance, conferences, and you name it.

This has kept me going now for quite some time, but it is much harder for the younger people who haven't been doing it for quite so many years.

There is one woman, for example, who teaches courses at St. Mary's, Dalhousie and the Mount, who says that she isn't making as much from all of her work as she would from the subsistence pay she could be given if she went on strike.

She, too, by the way, comes to the Life Sciences Centre, where she has more or less appropriated a closet for some purposes or another on the third floor.

She is worried now that by the time she is eligible for a tenured position, such positions will all have been eliminated, and replaced by part-time positions. It is becoming difficult to get her out of the closet, since she is afraid that other part-time professors will try to stake it out, and that this situation will get progressively worse.

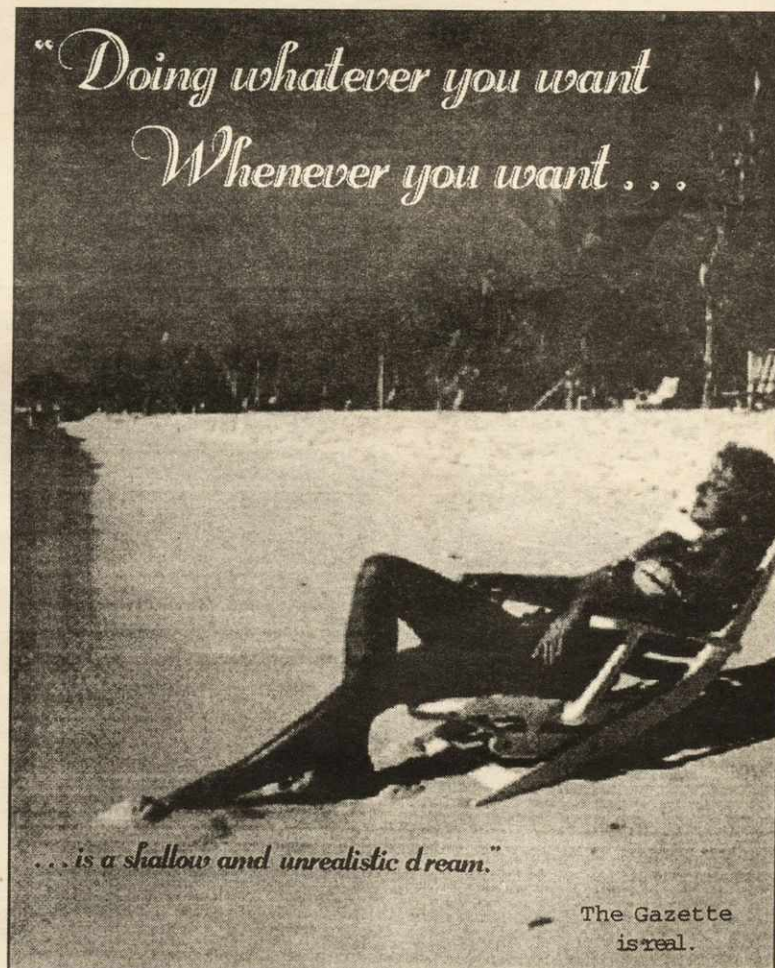
This is all the news, but I'll write again soon.

DON HAMBRICH

BANNER SOLUTIONS

Some senate representatives have requested that students who understand database programming submit ideas and proposals to solve the computer programming problem with SCT Banner system. Proposals should involve the least possible amount of reprogramming. Proposals should also take into account the need for students to have 2 credits (12 credit hours) per term to receive student loans, the need for accurate grade recording at Christmas, and the fact that should "R" courses be broken into half-credits, the University cannot force students to take a "B" course related to a prerequisite "A" course in the same year. For more information, please contact the Senate Offices on the 2nd floor of the A&A building. Proposals should be submitted in writing to the Senate Offices.

*"Doing whatever you want
Whenever you want . . .*



... is a shallow and unrealistic dream."

The Gazette
is real.

**Gazette staff meetings.
Mondays at 4:30,
room 312 SUB.**