

Flogging that poor dead horse

To the editors,

At the risk of flogging a dead horse, I would like to pursue Mike Driscoll's question which concluded his letter "Decline in relative wages regretable" appearing in *The Gazette's* Feb. 7 edition. The question was: 'How can he (Mr. Snowden) say that the "labour-management rhetoric does not suit any university setting"? Mr. Driscoll's question is the culmination of a somewhat eloquent attempt to defend and in some way clarify Rick Janson's statement that faculty's wages are declining in comparison with 'the private sector'. I thank Mr. Driscoll for challenging my account and hope this reply is more satisfactory.

The labour-management rhetoric does not suit any university setting because such rhetoric implies an adversarial relationship which universities were not meant to foster, born of what Mr. Bruce Gordon ("*DFA held Dal campus hostage*" *Gazette*, Feb. 7, p. 14) has aptly called "the cult of self-interest." He declares the most lamentable aspect of the recent dispute between Dal administration and the DFA to be "the endless claims from all sides that their only real interest was the betterment of Dalhousie." The immediate reply would seem to be that as Mr. Driscoll puts it, "professors have...(a) moral right to protect their real wages", in the interests of the university (i.e. — we would otherwise lose good professors to other institutions).

For the sake of argument I will grant Mr. Driscoll this much: that the DFA has a moral right to protect the faculty's real salaries. So they have a right. Now, where is the responsibility commensurate with said right? The responsibility is surely to us, the students, in that we pay, albeit nominally, to learn from the

faculty in the various disciplines offered. Where does the administration fit in? Originally, there were no administrators — the professors took care of such matters. Now, the administrators do the tedious work to leave the teaching and learning to professors and students. If administrators are not doing their work properly or responsibly then it is they who should be affected by faculty actions not the students.

To suggest, as Messrs. Janson and Driscoll do, that labour-management rhetoric is appropriate to the university setting is to imply the following: professors are merely responsible to themselves as wage-earners and the administrators are responsible to themselves as 'owners of the means of production'. We, the students, are left out of the picture unless we are prepared to choose sides or make ourselves indefinitely 'neutral' as Mr. Gordon's letter suggests. I will try to anticipate a reply by suggesting what the DFA might have done as an alternative: a) if the DFA really does have the abovementioned moral right and accepts the responsibilities which such a right entails, then it should have made some effort to guarantee that its actions would in no way affect those responsibilities; b) such a feat could be accomplished either by offering classes off campus or by seeking employment elsewhere at the end of the current academic year. Tough, perhaps even impossible you say?

The fact that the DFA did not choose either of these options is an indication that the university has been reduced to less than the sum of its parts: students + faculty + administration = labour + management. What happened to the professors who wanted to teach for the sake of teaching? It would appear that they are outnumbered by those who seek higher salaries. The falacy in applying the labour-management rhetoric to the university setting is that ideals such as the pursuit

of knowledge and the passing on of knowledge are compromised out of existence in favour of self-interest. The ideal has been lost and there seems to be no attempt to retrieve it. Our university is now merely the reflection of the industrial battlefield, something which Plato's Academy stood above.

Sincerely yours,
Marcus Snowden

DFA strike defended

To the editors,

Re: Bruce Gordon's remarks concerning the DFA in last week's *Gazette*.

The students of Dalhousie should respect the DFA's act of responsibility. They realized that a strike would affect all those attending Dalhousie. The 1985 Dal graduates would have entered the job market much later than those of other Canadian Universities; other students with budgeted funds would have suffered through the year, unable to attend the next academic session.

I am thankful that the student population has not suffered through strike action. I am grateful to the faculty of Dalhousie for the quality of education that I am receiving here. However, I do not envy the students who will follow after me. If faculty wages remain lower than the average, Dalhousie will lose the prestige it has worked so hard to gain.

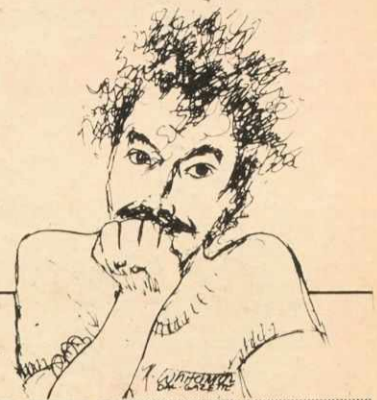
Sincerely,
M.C.J. Hillier

P.S. It seems strange that the administration charges the highest tuition fees in Atlantic Canada and denies the faculty a salary competitive with other Canadian Universities.

Unemployment no fun

BEING UNEMPLOYED IS not a lot of fun. The loss of income, social standing and the constant pressure of finding non-existent work is not a pleasant experience.

It is no secret that Canadians are more concerned about unemployment than any other



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issue before them. With an estimated two million people officially unemployed or having given up the search for work altogether — in addition to the uncounted ranks of the underemployed — this national crisis has touched more Canadians in a directly personal way than any other.

To say that we need a fresh approach to the unemployment problem is indeed an understatement. Yet the Tories have offered little in the way of job creation, nothing in the way of innovation in our present social structures meant to deal with those caught in this nightmare, and in fact have made life exceedingly harder for those of us without work.

Mulroney promised jobs. He promised his programmes would be financed by economic growth, not cutbacks. Instead thousands are being tossed out of work as the cuts sweep through federal institutions and programmes, and hardship faces many others as the effects ripple through our economy.

What we need is a new strategy in this country to deal with unemployment and the social structures of a system that was never intended to deal with so many people out of work, and so many people out of work for so long. We don't need a crackdown on the unemployed. We need some creative thinking about a long term problem that is going to be with us at least for the next decade.

"Once we admit that unemployment is a long-term, structural situation, we must bluntly face the reality that our welfare, unemployment insurance and job retraining schemes were designed to serve the last economy," states Dian Cohen and Kristin Shannon in their book *The Next Canadian Economy*. "We cannot afford, year after year, to hand out a billion dollars a month from a programme that was designed as a 'temporary' response to a 'temporary' problem."

The authors go on to state that the politicians should get up their courage and deal with the larger question of income distribution in Canada.

If we are going to have long term unemployment, then we must have a humane social structure that will provide support to Canadians that is both adequate and dignified.

The ill-thought-out cuts passed on by government have only made the problem worse,

attacking sectors of the economy that have been productive in creating both jobs and revenues for the federal treasury via taxation.

Take the arts, for example. While they take in 1.45 per cent of federal expenditures, they make up more than four per cent of the gross national product. In addition they employ about the same number of people in Canada as the agricultural sector, yet they have taken among the heaviest blows of the recent cuts.

In cutting back on arts and culture, the government is in effect shutting the door on many of its options for a successful social transition to the coming information based economy. Artists have been on the cutting edge of economic growth around the world. The creativity they supply is one source of input in the search for solutions. But instead the arts community is up in arms over outright attacks on their very livelihoods by the government.

The development of arts and culture are particularly important in dealing with the psychology of an "unemployment culture." Clearly our value system based on the old protestant work ethic has to change in light of such huge unemployment figures.

But unemployment is not only a problem for governments and artists to deal with.

On a local level all of our institutions have a role to play.

While many of our student politicians make a lot of noise about accessibility to our educational institutions, they themselves do little to lower the barriers to their own institutions and functions and do little to encourage unemployed youth. Why, for example, is it that the student union does not offer reduced rates of admission to its functions for the unemployed?

Many of these same people may be the many that slip through the floorboards in their pursuit for post-secondary education financing. I know — I'm one.

The student union could use some fresh thinking in this department. A creative policy for the unemployed around the university community could be a positive step.

If unemployment is Canada's number one problem — let's deal with it constructively rather than play lip service to the crisis.

This is the last of my columns for this year. Bye Bye...