

J. J. Mangalam

The politics of intimidation

by Daniel Lingeman
Daniel Lingeman is a "special" graduate student in sociology and anthropology.

The experience related here is not unique in the annals of any University or University Department. It is, however, indicative of a state of affairs in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at Dalhousie University ever since the advent to the Chairmanship of the Graduate Education Committee of Professor J.J. Mangalam. Involved are the politics on intimidation.

Its origins lie in the struggle waged last autumn by the Graduate Students of the Department against a "core programme" imposed upon the Graduate student body by the ex-Chairman of the Graduate Education Committee, Dr. J.J. Mangalam and the present lame-duck Chairman of the Department, Dr. Donald H. Clairmont.

This core programme was imposed without any prior consultation with the graduate student body or the vast majority of the departmental faculty. This writer, along with his fellow students and a good part of the faculty, waged an active fight against the arbitrary imposition of this programme. The opposition to it was largely based on the lack of consultation with the departmental community of students and faculty and also on the general incoherence of its "presentation."

The undersigned, along with all the other Graduates who had arrived in Halifax to undertake studies in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology signed a declaration in which his considered objections to the programme were formulated, largely on the grounds stated above.

The aftermath of this action was a summons to the office of Dr. J.J. Mangalam, the then Chairman of the Graduate Education Committee, and to be told out-of-hand of expulsion from the programme. In addition, the recipient of this unwelcome news was told by Dr. Mangalam that his decision would be ratified in a letter, signed by him and/or Dr. Clairmont, to be dispatched the very same day.

Four days later, a document predated at least twenty-four hours in advance, was received by the undersigned. It consisted of a copy of a letter addressed to Dr. G.F.O. Langstroth, Dean of Graduate Studies, from Dr. Mangalam, and not co-signed or ratified by other members of the Graduate Committee. Dr. Mangalam states in the letter:

"The Graduate Committee of this department met and reviewed the progress of the above student and are in agreement that we should recommend his being dropped from the graduate programme. Briefly, this recommendation is based on the following evidence:

"1. The student was admitted to a two-year M.A. programme, beginning with academic year 1971-72.

"2. He enrolled in the

following courses and with the results indicated against each:

301: Statistics (Poushinsky) — Incomplete

310: Research Methods (Brodie) — Incomplete

450: Theory (Poushinsky & Schliewen) — Withdrew

501A: Comparative Socialization (Grady) — A-

504B: Sociology of Migration (Mangalam) — Incomplete

because it 'owed its support to the Committee.' There was almost no attempt to discuss the facts of the case. Most of it consisted of a heavy-handed appeal to the Faculty for loyalty to the Committee.

As a result of the meeting a resolution was passed and presented as a compromise. Its terms were that the undersigned was suspended from the programme pending

Mangalam investigation

The following motion was passed by the January 19 meeting of the Sociology Anthropology Course Union:

"Be it resolved that in light of student dissatisfaction with the current Graduate Program, and in light of numerous student complaints regarding Dr. J.J. Mangalam's intimidating behaviour towards students, the university Ombudsman be requested by the Sociology Anthropology Course Union to investigate: a) the legality and functioning of the Graduate Program and, b) the charges of intimidation against Dr. J.J. Mangalam."

Experimental: Social Policy (Clairmont) — all students received B+

"3. He has held a graduate fellowship during 1971-72.

"4. According to him he has been a graduate student in History at the University of New Brunswick but did not complete his degree.

"5. The assessments gathered from his professors in the courses he did not complete and the experimental course in which all the students received the same grade have been negative in an overall sense.

"I will be happy to provide you with any further information concerning this case."

The disinterested observer might want to dwell at length on the quality of mind and intellect, not to speak of the sense of humanity, in an individual who sees the above as "evidence" for recommending that a student be expelled from a University. The letter is mainly an inventory of largely irrelevant statements and innuendo.

Evaluations were solicited after the decision recommending expulsion, in what can only be construed as a most stringent violation of the norms of due process and fair play. In addition, no meeting of the Graduate Education Committee took place prior to the decision, or at least, no records have been found of such a meeting.

Efforts to obtain clarification on this point from members of the Graduate Education Committee of the Department were to no avail.

As a consequence the University Ombudsman was invited to look at the case.

A meeting of the departmental faculty was called, in which the Chairman of the Department conducted what can only be called the "prosecution." On the appearance of the Ombudsman to the meeting, however, he prudently retreated and the attack was led by Dr. J.J. Mangalam. The latter attempted to justify his own actions and those of his colleague Dr. S.D. Clark. (See the GAZETTE, November 10, 1972) The crux of Dr. Mangalam's argument was that the Faculty should endorse this action

completion of the outstanding assignments. The departmental faculty expected completion of these papers in January, 1973, with the Graduate Education Committee reporting its recommendation by January 15, 1973.

That the above decision does not constitute a compromise is demonstrated by the fact that, even upon successful completion of the courses, the undersigned is victimized by missing a semester of courses and thus in fact loses a year of study. It also endorses Professor Mangalam's unilateral action to withdraw the undersigned's teaching assistantship which all graduate students in the Department receive.

In spite of its manifest inequity the undersigned has fulfilled the conditions imposed upon him. This cooperation has not however been reciprocated and harassment has continued unabated. Thus, in one of the courses marked incomplete, the instructor, Dr. Mangalam, presented only haphazard and incomplete evaluation of the drafts presented at his request. For instance, one twenty-page draft was apparently read up to page four, where comments on its contents stopped. Furthermore a few days before the due date of the paper, Dr. Mangalam imposed whole new directives on its orientation. In addition, this course was marked incomplete after the paper was handed in and accepted by Dr. Mangalam but not evaluated and apparently not even read by him.

Another instructor, N.P. Poushinsky, has systematically avoided efforts to meet with him in order to discuss the requirements of the paper. This occurred after giving unsolicited assurances that he would in fact be "happy to help." As well, Professor Poushinsky confronted the undersigned with the necessity to implement a computing programme whose basic elements were absent or erroneous as provided by the instructor.

The pattern of events which have been related here is clear. First, a new programme of studies is imposed upon the graduate students in the

Department. Second, students and faculty protest. Third, the politics of intimidation begin, culminating, in this case, in the attempt to dismiss a student. Fourth, legitimization of the act is sought by appealing to the Faculty to "loyally" support its Graduate Education Committee. Fifth, a resolution, spuriously presented as a compromise, is voted upon in which the student concerned is placed again in the hands of faculty who have already demonstrated severe bias in their treatment of his work. Sixth, while the student is attempting to review and complete his programme of work, Dr. Mangalam and his associates refused to provide the professional guidance necessary to fulfill the requirements. Even more destructively, Dr. Mangalam undertakes a veritable campaign of harassment — one obviously designed to interfere with the student's work.

The above is perhaps the most glaring example of the politics of intimidation to which the graduate students in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology have been subjected since the ascendancy of Dr. Mangalam to the key position of Chairman of the Graduate Education Committee. What emerges is an attempt to achieve social control and power by intimidation, misrepresentation and innuendo.

In one of his Sociology 100

print outs Dr. Mangalam advances the sociologically dubious premise that "it is society's right to eliminate its offending members." It would appear that he fancies himself as one of society's guardians. When however he is caught in flagrant violation of his responsibility as a teacher this behaviour must be brought to the attention of the University.

Since communication within the Department of Sociology and Anthropology has been under the tight control of Dr. Mangalam's close friend and associate, Dr. Donald H. Clairmont, the undersigned has no alternative but to turn to the students and faculty of Dalhousie University at large.

There comes a time when society itself needs to be protected from the expressions of vigilant zeal of its self professed defenders.

The writer is not the only student (graduate or undergraduate) who has been subject to such intimidation. Arbitrary and discriminatory actions have also been undertaken against members of the departmental faculty.

The hope is that in bringing the facts of this case to the attention of the University community, a careful investigation of the situation in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology will result, and an effective means to redress these grievances will be provided.

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