

An analysis by Trevor Parsons

Transition Year crippled...why?

Want to frustrate a lot of people? Talk to our friends over in the administration building — they'll tell you how.

First, you tell a community which hasn't had too many breaks in the last few hundred years that you're finally going to help them. Then, call a meeting at which you outline a new university program designed to aid black and Indian students get into university. The next step is to raise everyone's hopes as high as possible by forming a committee of blacks, students, Indians, faculty and administration to oversee the new programme. Finally, when everyone is set to go, you tell them that it's

TYP stalled

The Transitional Year Program runs into problems which ever way it turns.

As the situation stands now, it may go ahead next year, and on the other hand it may not.

The program was designed to encourage at least a few more black and Indian students from Nova Scotia to go to university. It involves a make-up year for twenty such students after high school to give them Dalhousie entrance qualifications, and then three regular years in regular university course. The program was slated to start this coming September on a one year trial basis.

Money seems to be the problem now. A few months ago, assurances were given to the students (black and white) who formulated the program that money would be made available by the university, the provincial government and any other sources which would contribute. The cost for the twenty students for the four year period was estimated at \$80,000.

But now the future is not so bright. Even if money can be raised through external sources (the Dalhousie grant from the provincial government increased by 37% this year so the government is unwilling to funnel more money into Dalhousie), it is highly likely, according to Academic Vice-President Andrew MacKay, that the number of students admitted to the program will have to be reduced. However, he expressed hope that the instructors "would be willing to work for something less than was planned."

Asked what would happen to TYP without external financial aid, MacKay said, "Every effort will be made to provide an administration for TYP. I'm putting it this way rather than a commitment to a specific number of students."

At present, out of six thousand students at Dalhousie, and with approximately one fourth of this entire country's black community living in Halifax, the number of black Dalhousie students from Nova Scotia has been estimated at five.

a nice idea, but someone else will have to pay the shot.

If you don't know what I'm talking about, I'd better tell you — it's about TYP or the Transition Year Programme.

Early in 1969 the idea for such a programme was presented to the university by graduate students, Paul and Slycia Norton and Terry Kemper. The suggestion was received enthusiastically by almost all.

But, alas. The people that matter are not poor and they are not black. Besides, that, they have never been deprived of the opportunity to attend university. So why should they give money to help those people? After all, this is a free enterprise society where anyone can make good. All he needs is some hard work and a few breaks — like being born into a white middle or upper class family and making a few good, influential friends on his way through university.

No one can doubt that the "people" (after all, businessmen are people too) who control the purse

strings around here had both these "breaks" in abundance. But there is no need to elaborate on the "Board of Governors Friendship Circle". That is what most of this newspaper is concerned with.

Rather than go into the reasons for having a program such as T.Y.P., a brief description of the program prepared for distribution by the University has been included on this page.

As previously mentioned, the program was received enthusiastically by almost everyone — especially in the black community. It reinforced their hopes that the poor and the minorities could work within the system to obtain equal opportunity.

In the university community, reaction was also good. The students were praised for initiating and pushing the idea. Surprisingly, the faculty and administration were praised for listening to and acting upon the suggestions of students.

That is all over now. No more praise for the students or the benevolent administration. Only frustration, developed from trying to work within the system.

The TYP Program

Blacks and Indians have been systematically and usually deliberately cut off from the benefits of society, including university education. Because of the admissions policies of most universities, they have systematically been denied this particular benefit.

One possible solution to the problem is the proposed Transition Year Program (TYP).

What follows is a description of this proposal. At this stage, everything connected with the TYP — indeed, the program itself — is subject to review and change.

The Goal of the TYP: If the TYP is started, its ultimate aim is to give those young Nova Scotians who successfully complete the program sufficient training and background to enable them to enter a degree program at Dalhousie. The Nova Scotia College of Art and Design is co-operating with Dalhousie, and, as with Dalhousie, those who successfully complete the TYP would be admitted as degree candidates to the College of Art and Design.

Admission to the TYP: The Committee on the TYP has recommended that applicants be between the ages of 17 and 24 inclusive; and has further recommended that, during the first year, only applications from Blacks and Indians will be accepted.

Each applicant would be considered by an admissions committee. This committee would concern itself with the applicant's chances of success, rather than his or her past performance.

The committee would base its decision on a series of aptitude and achievement tests, and on personal interviews.

If the applicant would care to submit other material: for example, school marks letters of recommendation, these would also be considered by the committee.

The Transition Year Curriculum: It is expected that the students in the Transition Year Program will enter the Program with a wide variety of backgrounds. Some students will need help in all areas; others may need help in only a few areas. The program is flexible, and the student will receive help in the areas where he or she needs it.

Students will spend at least eight, and no more than thirteen hours in classroom work each week. Sufficient individual tutorial help will be made available to each student.

The classroom work will be concentrated in these areas:

1. Reading and Study Skills

Other universities have programs similar to the Transition Year, and almost always, the course devoted to developing reading and study skills is the most

popular with the students; and it is usually one they consider the most valuable.

This course will show the students how to organize themselves most effectively for academic success.

2. Composition

Many students know what they want to say, but they don't know how to say it. The course in Composition will help the students to close this gap. Today, success in any field requires skill in self-expression; and this course will show the TYP students how to develop that skill.

3. Mathematics

The possibility of two separate mathematics classes has been discussed. One would be for students who intend to go into degree programs in which mathematical skills are essential (for example, in the sciences); the other for students who will need a minimum of mathematics in their future careers.

4. Seminars

There will be weekly meetings at which the students would learn about the university and the surrounding community. The students could also indicate, at these seminars, particular difficulties they are experiencing.

5. Cultural Activities

The TYP would not be limited to academic studies. A program of cultural activities has been proposed, including classes in studio art to be given by the College of Art and Design would be included under this heading.

Financing the TYP: Dalhousie is exploring a number of possible sources to finance the TYP. It is assumed that the financing of the TYP would be such as to include adequate student support. The families of the students would not have to expect to support the students during the TYP.

There would be several sources of support available to those who successfully complete the program, and who enter the university; and Dalhousie is actively seeking to augment these.

TYP Staff: The Staff of the program would be drawn mainly from the faculty and student body of Dalhousie. On occasion, outside experts will join the program for special classes and problem areas.

Will the TYP Succeed? A number of universities now have programs like the TYP. Some are successful; others are not. While it is not possible to say exactly why some programs succeed, it is known that the successful ones are those with approval from the community. Thus, we can say we do not know if the program will succeed; but, we do know it will fail if it does not have community approval and co-operation.

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