

"Less democracy, more Soc"

Soc faculty moves right

"This department has taken a turn to the right, and we're going to see that it stays that way," says Bill Stephens, one of the new crop of right wing faculty which has sprung up in Dal's Sociology Department this year. Stephens, just back from a year on sabbatical in Spain, made his remarks at a recent student-faculty meeting called to inform the students about the faculty's "new design" for departmental decision-making.

The right wing first emerged as a strong force in mid-summer with the arrival of two new faculty members, J. J. Mangalam and Herone Barkow. They joined force with Stephens, John Hamer and Gary Bouma to form the first substantial right wing bloc in the Sociology Department's history.

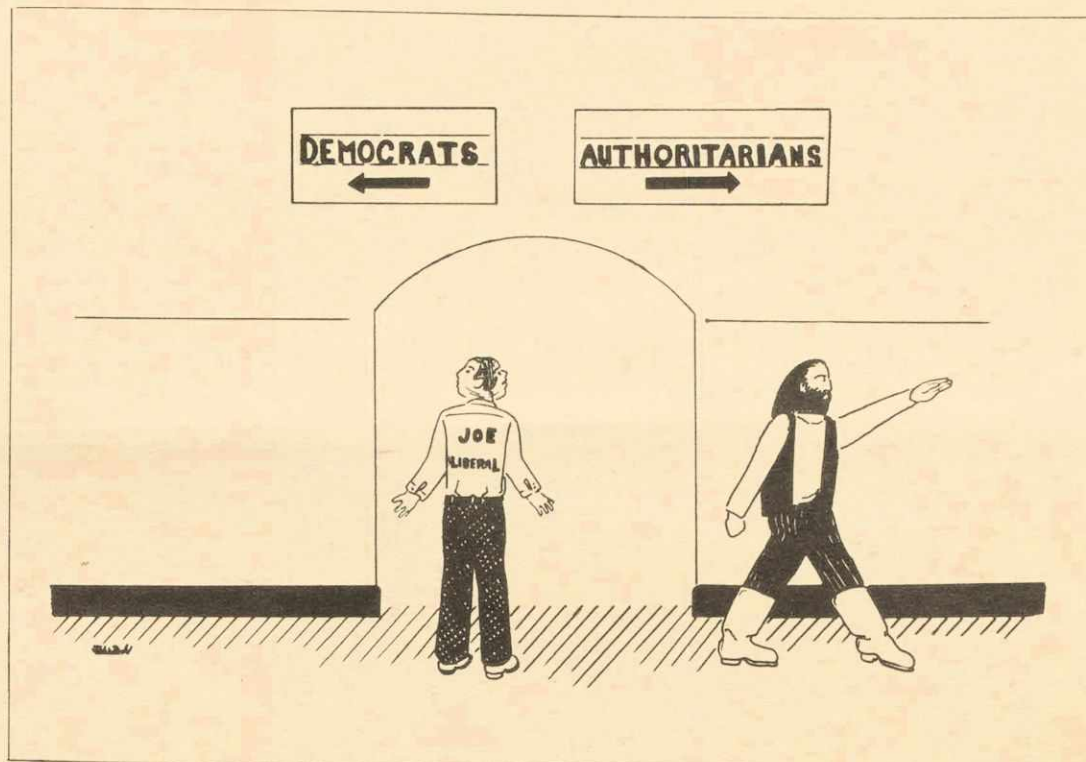
THE RIGHT-WINGERS' FIRST TARGET was the department's democratic system of decision-making. Under this system, committees dealing with such areas as curriculum, budget, and recruiting of faculty consisted of an equal number of faculty and students. They made recommendations to a general meeting of the whole department. All final decisions, with the exception of hiring and firing of faculty, and student evaluation, were made at the departmental meetings. Faculty and an equal number of student representatives voted on the decisions.

The right wing is opposed to any form of meaningful student involvement, especially a system which gives students voting powers equal to those of faculty. Their position, as John Hamer once put it, is that "this department needs less democracy and more sociology." The right wing faculty pushed to have the democratic system replaced by a traditional form of departmental control where only faculty had any real power.

Despite the fact that the faculty had no right, under terms of their agreement with Sociology students, to change the department without consulting the students, the right wing recently manoeuvred the rest of the faculty into adopting a new system for running the department. The new system consists of a central committee — three faculty and two students representatives, plus the departmental chairman — which will make departmental decisions. The committee system remains basically the same.

THE REAL CHANGE is that students have lost their equal voting power and their real ability to affect decisions. They now can participate but can be easily outvoted and ignored. The new structure is being justified on the grounds that it is more efficient. But as Stephens admitted at the meeting, this argument is a smokescreen to cover up the underlying anti-democratic and anti-student sentiment of the right wing.

At this point, one might well



ask why the other faculty members, the liberals and the left, as well as the students, allowed this to happen. The students were caught by surprise and were unprepared to immediately fight the issue. They are presently working to campaign against the new structure.

On the faculty side, there are several reasons for the liberals' actions. One is that most liberal faculty, deep down, were not unhappy to see the troublesome students disposed of. The students had been a source of embarrassment and frustration — disagreeing with faculty ideas and interests, and creating several minor conflicts between themselves and faculty. The liberals, afraid to initiate action against students, were, however, willing to stand by and let the right wing do the dirty work for them.

THE LIBERAL FACULTY is also afraid of an internal confrontation between opposing faculty factions. In order to preserve consensus in the department, they would rather take the easy way out and side with what seems to be the prevailing sentiment in the department at a particular time.

Unfortunately, and indeed tragically, many liberal-minded faculty members have failed to realize that giving their co-operation to the right wing, not only undermines the student position, but more importantly endangers the whole idea of departmental democracy. This idea surely is more important than minor squabbles with students or maintaining a false consensus among faculty.

The removal of students from effective participation in departmental business is only the first step in a trend towards an authoritarian department. Even in the few months since the right has banded together, relationships and procedures among faculty themselves have felt the weight of anti-democratic ideas. For example, Mangalam, a senior and conservative faculty member, has complained that junior faculty, not to mention students and secretaries, have been ad-

ressing him by his first name rather than his saintly and omnipotent title of "Doctor."

More importantly, however, are the faculty of arguments voiced at faculty meetings. The question of faculty promotion has been debated at recent meetings. First of all, the faculty decided to put off all promotion this year, since they could not agree whether a particular left-wing faculty member, due for promotion, really deserved it. In other discussions, the right wing suggested no promotions be granted to professors without a PhD, regardless of experience, teaching quality or intellectual ability. They also suggested that no one without a PhD should be hired and even that publications, as opposed to ability, be the criterion for promotion.

DURING THIS DISCUSSION, one right-wing faculty member made a motion (which he later retracted) that the four faculty members who do not have Ph-

D's could not vote on the question of making PhD's compulsory for hiring and promotion. For six years, the department has operated well without such rules, but the right wing wants control over who gets into and who gets ahead in the department.

One way of doing this is to set up invidious distinctions among faculty, and create a hierarchy of power, which is completely out of keeping with the department's egalitarian atmosphere.

The right wing has only been in action for a short time, but they already have made a distinct impression on life in the department, in the aforementioned ways as well as others.

But the most discouraging aspect of this whole matter is that thus far there has been no organized opposition from either liberal faculty or students, inside the classroom or in departmental meetings. The future looks very bleak in terms of maintaining a liberal and democratic department.

(cont'd on p. 6)

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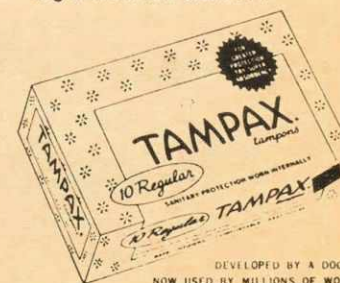


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