

WORDS FROM THE WISE...

Article "biased, misleading"

Dear Editor:

A recent article implies that Dalhousie has a "military role" because some of its faculty members have research grants from the Defence Research Board of Canada or because they sit on advisory committees of that agency. This article was based on a single report written from a "leftist" or "activist" view.

The GAZETTE has taken it seriously enough to present its readers with a piece of irresponsible, biased, and unintelligent journalism, and uses the report as the basis for an attack on the research being conducted at Dalhousie, and on certain members of the faculty. Many of the implications are false, and many of the facts are wrong. In this reply, I will restrict myself to research done by psychologists at Dalhousie. I hope that other staff members who are implicitly or explicitly criticized will have an opportunity to reply on their own behalf.

Dr. William King left the Psychology Department five years ago, and Dr. Over has not been here for close to two years. Professor James' grant terminated several years ago, certainly no later than 1967. I have not held a grant for over two years; the implication that I had one in 1970 is incorrect. Much of the other information is totally irrelevant to the question of Dalhousie's role in matters of defence; for example, the fact that an electronics firm in Dartmouth has a contract with the U.S. Navy.

The article says that Dalhousie faculty members "have taken part in Canadian war research". This is patently untrue. The DRB, which is a civilian service with the Department of Defense, provides research grants for which scientists apply on a competitive basis. None of the work carried out in the Psychology Department was "contract research"; i.e., research requested by a military agency for a specific purpose. All of the projects concern problems in basic rather than applied research, mostly in the areas of human perception and learning. All of the work could as easily have been supported by the National Research Council, which is devoted to basic research; however, since NRC funds are already overcommitted, several professors have simply turned to a convenient source of money to develop their research interests.

Research proposals are supported primarily on the basis of specific merit. The DRB does require an indication in the proposal of its "relation to defence interests". In most cases, my colleagues and I find it difficult to make a convincing case for such a relation, and the relation is usually stated in a very general manner. For example, my work on the after-effects of perceived movement will contribute to an understanding of the basic visual processes involved in the

perception of movement; this obviously has some "relation to defence interest". In fact, all scientific knowledge has some "relation to defence interest", no matter who supports it. I find it admirable that the DRB is willing to support research in areas which have only a remote relationship to military applications. The GAZETTE should, instead of publishing misleading criticism, welcome the fact that Dalhousie's research program is enriched by grants from that agency.

It is our hope that the research supported by the DRB will enrich scientific psychology. Likewise, we realize that all published research can be used for military applications no matter what agency supports it. My research on the pigeon's ability to recognize the presence of a person in a picture may have a much more direct application to military purposes than the work supported by the DRB. (For example, a pigeon observing a TV screen could be trained to signal the appearance of an "infiltrator" in a given area.) Yet I do not terminate such research, which is supported by the "non-military" National Research Council, simply because it might be used for undesirable purposes. Any scientist who adds to the fund of public knowledge takes this risk. On the other hand, much of the research supported by the DRB can be used for peaceful purposes. For example, Dr. McNulty's current work on sound location under water will be very helpful in the exploration and exploitation of resources under water and on the ocean floor.

There are certainly instances of research done in North American universities (not necessarily in Canada) which has had direct military application and should be looked at with suspicion or disapproval.

I do not believe that work of this nature is carried on at Dalhousie. I would welcome an accurate unbiased description and discussion of all work supported by the DRB at Dalhousie. But it seems to me that the inaccurate, biased and mindless article that you have chosen to print has only served to mislead those readers who know nothing about the question, and can only damage the stature and reputation of your newspaper.

Sincerely yours,
W. K. Honig
Professor of Psychology

EDITOR'S NOTE:

Dr. Honig's letter is primarily a defense of his own work at Dalhousie (with DRB funds).

He criticizes the GAZETTE for using a "leftist" report as the basis for the article. This is true. The Young Socialists (a Trotskyite group in Halifax) prepared the original report and submitted it to the GAZETTE.

Honig also questioned the accuracy of many facts in the report; admittedly there were inaccuracies. Accurate and PUBLIC disclosures of current DRB research projects at Dal are not available to students, to

the student press, or (in this case) to the Young Socialists.

Some of the criticisms, then, are justifiable and important. However, there are many undisclosed facts about DRB research at Dal. The wider implications of such research must, therefore, be disclosed and analysed.

First, Dr. Honig works for a university which accepts government grants for research. Much of this research has potential for use by the military/industrial complex.

Second, Dr. Honig admits his use of DRB funds. He explained in detail the type of research he did and why he applied for government funds. He cannot expect to use arguments about the co-opting of knowledge and research by the military as a rationalization for this. Further, he should not expect the GAZETTE to withhold pertinent information from students about the activities of the military/industrial complex in this and other countries.

As long as Dal accepts DRB grants it will be implicated in war research. The complicity of the university administration (especially the Board of Governors) in such research will also continue.

Third, he states that the work at Dal could be funded by the National Research Council. Then in the next sentence, he explains that the NRC funds are over-committed. He and other researchers used government funds to further their own work and presumably their own status without giving sufficient thought to what effect their findings could have.

Fourth, he states that the GAZETTE should welcome DRB funded research at Dal instead of criticizing it with inaccurate reports. We refute this platitudinous statement. We do not (and never will) support war research at Dal. We do not condone the acceptance of tax money for this kind of work. We cannot applaud Honig, Kirby, or anyone else who accepts these funds with full knowledge of how and by whom their work will be used in the short term.

Fifth, Honig does not believe that war research is conducted at Dal. He states this belief emphatically and without reservation. This paper will work for a complete inquiry into DRB-funded research at Dal as he suggests.

In short, Honig may be unconcerned about DRB funding of scientific endeavour at Dal; he should be concerned about the implications of his work rather than the stature of the GAZETTE.

Regardless of the criticisms mentioned above, Honig is right in at least making a reply and pointing a few things out. One can only wonder if others who were mentioned (like Dr. Kirby of the Math Dept. who, when asked for comment, refused to say anything) have less justification to offer for their DRB research.

Students "belly-aching bourgeoisie"

Dear Editor:

An interesting fable about birds appeared in the November 17 issue of the Dalhousie GAZETTE, under the heading "Soc faculty moves right". At least with all the talk of "left wings" and "right wings", the article had more to do with birds than it did with Dalhousie's Department of Sociology and Anthropology.

I was disappointed, upon arriving at Dalhousie last summer, to find that a small, highly exclusive clique of poor-to-failing sociology students had ripped-off the slogans of the radical left and were masquerading as oppressed proletarians in order to make faculty members feel too guilty to flunk them out. Students aren't proletarians. As Mao teaches, students are very often the beneficiaries of capitalist exploitation of the proletariat. The custodial staff of this university belongs to the proletariat, and even the professors have to work for a living. Most of the student's don't.

The only justification for subsidizing students is that their education may ultimately benefit the larger society, the people. But what about students who don't take their education seriously, who cut their classes and flunk their exams and believe their professors have nothing to teach them? Such "students" are simply exploiting the masses while living lives of pleasurable ease and idleness. They are in the best tradition of bourgeois exploiters. They also make up the majority of students in the sociology clique.

This clique speaks in terms of "student participation" but opposes representative, as opposed to elitist, student organization. It includes no anthropology students, though ours is a joint department (through the authors of the unsigned article in the GAZETTE are apparently unaware of this last fact, consistently referring to the non-existent "Department of Sociology"). But the members of the clique are interested in power for themselves, not participation for the students.

Is it true, as the clique charges, that faculty members are willing to accept student participation but not student power? Speaking only for myself, it is quite true. So long as the administration of this university holds faculty members exclusively



responsible for acts of this department, how are we to delegate real power? If students want power they must seek it from its source, from the Board of Governors.

Though billed as one of the new feathers of the department's "right wing", I would be sympathetic to sharing power with students. But how am I to share power with students while retaining the entire responsibility for our joint actions? Power without responsibility is in the Fascist, not leftist, tradition.

No one who has seen the wretched and oppressed of this planet could take Dalhousie sociology students for anything but members of the belly-aching bourgeoisie. It would be nice if they were to stop playing games and get on with their studies.

Sincerely,
Jerome H. Barkow
Asst. Professor,
Dept. of Sociology & Anthropology

EDITOR'S NOTE:

It is unfortunate that Mr. Barkow chooses to regard the article in question as a fable.

It is a rather curious statement for a man who himself engages in fantasies about "poor-to-failing sociology students", students "masquerading as proletarians", and students being "bourgeois exploiters" to make. If Barkow has any facts to back up this claim it would be most enlightening if he would reveal them rather than shout slogans from the sidelines.

What is most disturbing to the authors of the article is that Barkow resorts to political rhetoric and name-calling rather than dealing with the issues raised in the original article. Does he deny that he supported the disenfranchisement of students in the department's decision-making process? Does he deny that he is sympathetic to right-wing views?

By his ability to see the article only in terms of birds and feathers, Barkow simply shows that he would make a better ornithologist than an anthropologist.

—by the authors of
"Soc faculty moves right"

To all we wish a happy Christmas and a new year filled with all your heart desires. The Gazette returns January 14, 1972, after a well-deserved rest.