

Taking a stand for part time students

At the Atlantic Federation of Students Conference last weekend there was a workshop on Student Aid where student aid for part-time students was dismissed as an unnecessary topic of discussion. The delegates present were presumably all full-time students and couldn't care less about financial assistance for their part-time counterparts. As a matter of fact, it was pointed out that part-time students could all well afford to go to school since they obviously held jobs when not in class so student organizations should not waste precious time dealing with financial aid for them.

Not all the delegates were as harsh as this about aid for part-time students. One Dalhousie delegate pointed out that part-time students at Dalhousie were forming their own organization so the initiative to press for student aid should come from part-time students themselves.

The Dalhousie Gazette does not agree with either of these positions. We think they represent an extremely elitist attitude on the part of A.F.S.

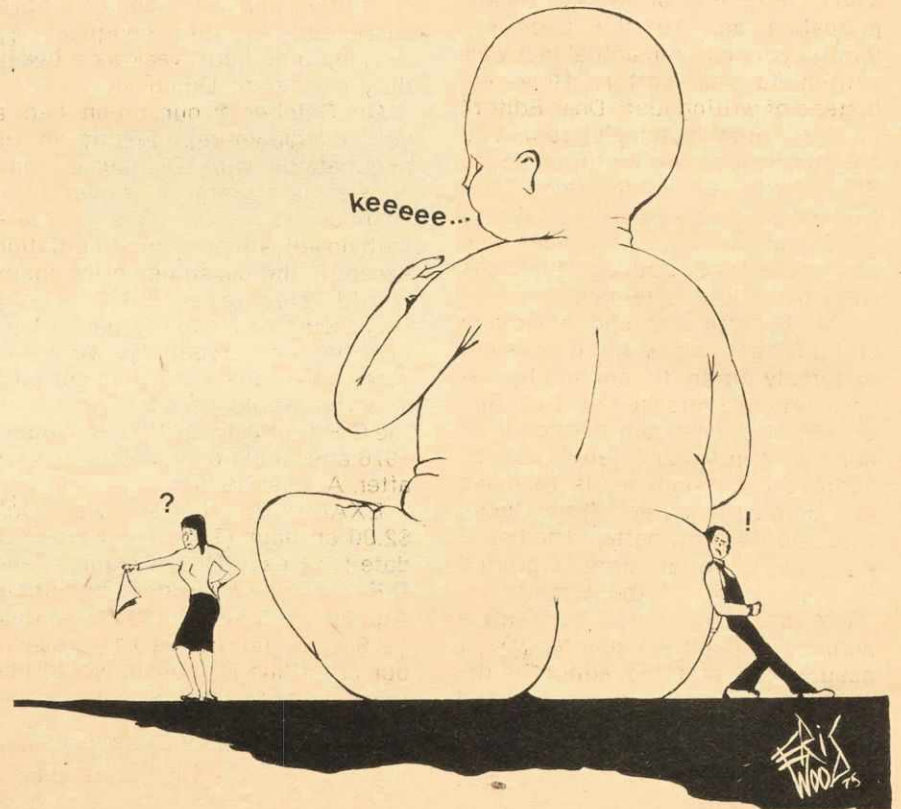
The issue of student aid - whether there should be any aid at all, if it provides equal opportunity of education as it is meant to, whether the present programs are abused and what the future policy on aid should be - is as complex as any other issue affecting government, taxpayers and special interest groups in our society today. Student aid cannot be seen in black and white terms any more than prison reform or the situation in Northern Ireland can be.

Both government and student organizations are reassessing the present student aid programs on federal and provincial levels. Naturally student organizations are trying to protect student interests and obviously this involves demanding more money from government for students. However, if organizations like the Atlantic Federation of Students are going to restrict themselves to demanding added funding for students presently enrolled in University on a full-time basis they are taking a very narrow and selfish approach. They are also missing the whole point behind the existence of government student aid.

The rationale behind government student aid is that in a democratic society no citizen should be denied access to an education for financial reasons. Equal opportunity for higher education is considered a right in modern Canadian society. One of the questions now being asked about the present system of student aid is whether or not it does provide an equal opportunity for all Canadians, or whether it merely makes things slightly easier for the economically privileged who would attend university anyway.

Certainly there are students now in our universities who would not be there were there no government aid program. And certainly it is the responsibility of student organizations like A.F.S. to make sure that government aid programs continue to provide enough funding for these students to remain in school and for others like them to attend in the future. However, there are also many who would be students who are not presently enrolled in university on even a part-time basis because they are ineligible for any financial assistance.

One of the aspects of student aid that most concerns student organizations is the living allowance presently permitted by government aid programs. Students protest that with the cost of living being what it is students cannot afford to eat and pay rent. If this is accepted as true, and there is a great deal of evidence



available to support this contention, then one must examine the contention that part-time students with paying jobs can afford to pay their own way through university. After rent, food and clothing are taken care of it is unlikely that potential part-time students will have much money left to take care of educational expenses. This is especially true if they wish to only work part-time in order to attend classes the rest of the time. Why should these potential or real students be presently denied government aid or more to the point, the assistance of student political organizations to obtain student aid in the future?

Further, there is a large group of potential part-time students who do not hold down "real" jobs, have no source of income and yet cannot get government financial assistance. We are referring here to women with dependent children. Women are discriminated in many areas of society and education is no exception. With dependent children many women cannot afford to attend university full-time yet they are often in a position where they provide the only means of financial support for their children. They desperately need to obtain higher levels of education to get better jobs but because they cannot get government financial aid they cannot attend university. It is a vicious circle which must be broken but which the AFS apparently has no desire to help break.

It's about time that student organizations woke up to the fact that the whole issue of student aid involves more than demanding more money to maintain the present aid system. The elitist attitude apparent at the AFS workshop last weekend must be changed immediately. Student leaders should not cry about students being discriminated against by government if they are willing to discriminate against part-time students by excluding their needs from a discussion of student aid.



Letters

To the Gazette,

It was refreshing to read the sensible and balanced article on plagiarism by Mike Greenfield in your issue of October 2nd., and to note that he categorically describes the use of a "research service's" papers as "illegal".

In the same issue of the **Gazette**, on page 13 (significantly?) there is a paid advertisement inviting students to send for a catalogue of 5,500

"research papers" from a U.S. cheating company!

May I invite the **Dalhousie Gazette** to put its money where its mouth is? Can we have a comment from the editor on whether the student newspaper intends to continue advertising illegality?

Yours sincerely,
John Flint.

Canada's Oldest College Newspaper

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