

Let me loiter, dammit

The threatened existence of the Grad House, and the ensuing outcry, says more about what this campus doesn't have than about what it is specifically, that the Grad House offers.

It's not that the Grad House doesn't offer a lot, it's just sad that in a university — a place supposedly committed to both challenging the status quo and

loiter anywhere else on campus that reflects so badly on Dal.

Loitering is essential to learning. It isn't ever graded, which means that people get the chance to discuss things without worrying about being wrong, it gives the brain downtime, and it gives people the chance to be in university for more than just classes and Thursday night blackouts at the Grawood. While loitering, people

The franchises are small, high-traffic areas — indelibly linked to the business that goes on there. They have little seating, tending to the swivelling, moulded plastic kind.

The Green Room and cafeteria are ugly, utilitarian spaces that are stocked with uncomfortable, foam IKEA knock-off furniture — you can't smoke, you are almost always in sight of the nearest food vending agency, and you can't ever really forget that you're there temporarily. It's all about focus. Robin's is about donuts and

promoting discussion — the death of one coffee shop means the death of the collegial atmosphere.

If the Grad House goes, so does any sense of a corporate-free presence at Dal.

Which isn't to say that the Grad House isn't commercial — though

the fact that they are losing money might make them want to be a little more commercial — but it is not a contrived environment.

The Grad House isn't a franchise. They have no head office, no pre-printed coffee mugs, no birdy mascots and no name-brand recognition.

A democratic, rather than a demographic environment — you can bring your own food, buy theirs, or just not eat. You can be underage, old, or just not the kind of person who likes to carry their ID everywhere. You can smoke, or abhor smokers.

Most importantly, you can loiter.

It's the ability to loiter that really differentiates the House. And it's the inability to effectively

run into friends they might not have otherwise seen, or met. Occasionally even their profs. Loitering promotes education as an integrated, rather than a separated process. All the time between classes flows together — making the idea of students as "consumers" that much harder to visualize, and swallow.

NTN Trivia ain't gonna do it. And while there's nothing to really stop anyone from lounging around the cafeteria, the Grawood, Harvey's, The Second Cup, Robin's or even the Green Room — none are particularly hospitable to discussion. From the lengthy, intellectual ones, to short, pointless gossipy ones.

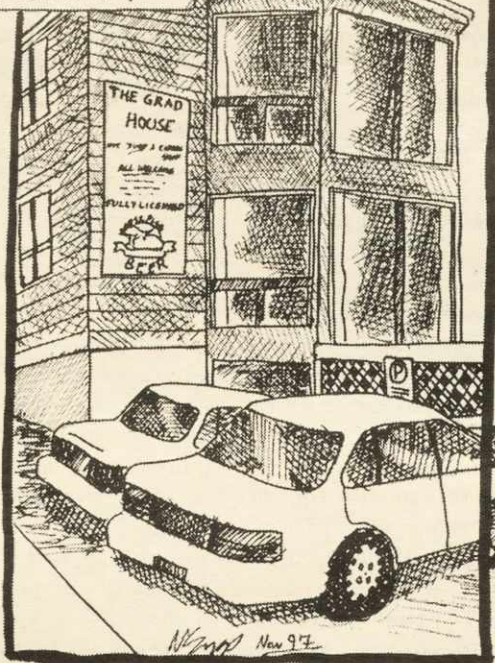
muffins, the Grad House just happens to sell them.

It's nice that the Grad House also happens to sell coffee, beer, juice and samosas, but I don't think they're required to keep the atmosphere going. The Grad House exists as an alternative to moulded plastic seats and the moulded plastic discussion they inspire.

So, while I am hoping that the Grad House stays open, I am also hoping — though less hopeful — that the university will establish a place for students that has nothing to do with class, Beaver Foods or the registrar's office.

SHELLEY ROBINSON

HOW MANY MBA'S DOES IT TAKE TO RUN THE GRAD HOUSE?



DALHOUSIE ASSOCIATION OF GRADUATE STUDENTS

NONE OF THEM.

Letters

Buy your own professor

I have exciting news to report. Our committee of part-time professors has finally decided on a long-range course of action. It was not easy.

There was a heated debate as to whether we actually did make more money than McDonald's employees — a claim apparently made at the Board of Governor's meeting at Dalhousie. A motion that our final demand should be parity with McDonald's was defeated by a hairsbreadth.

What we actually did was to formulate our plan according to what the universities themselves intend to do. First, as everyone knows, the government has struck a Revised Task Force for the Reform, Amalgamation and Enhanced Efficiency of University Systems in Halifax (RATRA), with a budget of ten million dollars and balanced representation from all university administrations in the area.

Our committee believes that if we make a representation to this body (before they determine who we actually are) we might at least be given a donation, or something, which would be more than we collectively make in a year (even if it's a one shot deal).

Certainly this is worth shooting for. But there is even more. We think that, given the actual structure of student fees and part-time professor salaries

in the Maritime region, we can actually recommend a course of action which will revolutionize, for evermore, the nature of university teaching. The idea is simple.

Since the average student pays \$3,750 per year, and the average part-time professor makes \$5,000 per year, what you do is ask for a government subsidy of \$1,250 per student, and then conduct a campaign in Canada and the U.S. with the slogan, "Buy your own Professor".

This is not as impractical as it sounds. In the first place, it smacks of free enterprise — the very idea that governments are so enamoured nowadays. (If government is unwilling to subsidise the scheme, one could simply reduce the cost of a professor a student could buy).

Then again, it appeals to the notions of student empowerment and a student-centred university. Students could band together in groups of five, say, and hire five part-time teachers to give courses, each student lending out his or her personal teacher for such a purpose.

They could then afford one-on-one teaching, now not even available in such institutions as Oxford or Harvard. More part-time teachers would be employed. The administration would not have to deal with the issues. Everyone would be happy.

I know there are still some difficulties. I shall write again to clarify them.

DON HAMBRICH

OPINION

On their behalf

It's incredible how news stories seem to have a domino effect in this country. Lately Halifax has been divided over the fate of one Nancy Morrison, who taught at Dalhousie Medical School and was once voted "Teacher of the Year". She currently faces charges of first-degree murder, for the death of Monctonian Paul Mills. First-degree murder carries a mandatory 25-year sentence with no chance of parole.

Now Morrison could conceivably be downgraded to a manslaughter conviction, which would require no minimum sentence. One problem — the Halifax police aren't about to let up on a big conviction like this one. There's a funny little quirk in the Nova Scotia justice system, and that is municipal police are the ones who decide what charges are to be laid against the arrestee, not the courts.

Why this is relevant to other Canadians is that this trial has come on the heels of Robert Latimer's second-degree murder conviction. Latimer is the Saskatchewan farmer who ended the life of his 12-year-old daughter, Tracy, in October 1993. The jury seemed to have no choice but to convict Latimer in his second trial which just ended November 6. In their defense, they have made a recommendation of a one-year sentence to the presiding judge. But the law is the law, and Latimer may end up serving a mandatory ten-year minimum.

Latimer maintains that what he did was in the utmost of compassion for his daughter. Tracy Latimer was

suffering from cerebral palsy at the time of her death. She had steel rods surgically implanted in her back, and was scheduled for more surgery a few weeks after her death. This surgery was to stretch out her ligaments, which were not growing at the same rate as the rest of her body.

It was after Latimer's conviction that Svend Robinson, New Democrat MP, attempted to bring the euthanasia debate into Parliament. Robinson was quoted as saying, "It's incredible that someone like Karla Homolka can get three years and Robert Latimer get ten." Justice Minister Anne McLellan said that she would look into amending the Criminal Code for leniency in these cases. She would not, however, take Robinson's advice on appointing a special committee to recommend revisions to the law. I'll have to agree with her on that one; a special committees' main concern is perpetuating their existence.

So what does Svend Robinson have to do with the mercy killing debate? He was previously involved in this debate when Sue Rodriguez was begging the Supreme Court of Canada for the right to have a doctor end her life. Rodriguez was diagnosed in 1991 with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), a degenerative muscle condition. Her condition began to worsen, and she made her appeal to die. In September 1992, the Court ruled 5-4 against her.

Rodriguez would not give up her battle. Out of her home in Saanich, B.C., she took a massive amount of morphine and Seconal pills on February 12, 1994. Svend Robinson and an unidentified physician were present when she took

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THE DALHOUSIE GAZETTE

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Vol. 130 No. 12

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