

Compulsory physical education

Student Government History #60

Through the Depression Students' Councils had become increasingly money-conscious, but the effects were severe for the first time in 1934-35. At its first meeting, on October 9, 1934, the Council learned that revenues were expected to decrease by \$2000, forcing a 20 percent cut in expenditure. The first economy measure was taken at once - GAZETTE was ordered to cut its mailing list down to those who had prepaid for a subscription, giving all others one week's notice of cancellation. The printer was changed to save money. Two Council members were working on a trust agreement whereby Council would assume complete control of the bookstore, which was still doing well financially. It was decided that there would be no regular meeting day.

An editorial praised Sidney Smith's work as Dean of Law. Smith had just resigned to become President of the University of Manitoba. One of the giants of his generation, he went on to the U. of T. Presidency and then Secretary of State for External Affairs. The new Dean of Law was Vincent C. MacDonald, a future Justice of the Nova Scotia Supreme Court.

For the first time on record the Council was unable to pass the main budgets at one meeting. After deciding to completely eliminate GAZETTE mailings, and to investigate cheaper awards systems a total of almost eight hours was spent in item-by-item discussion of budget submissions, most of which were cut. Sometimes an item was simply reduced by 20 percent. Elsewhere frills such as meals, telegrams and

taxes were removed. Enrollment had continued to fall, going down about 10 percent to 790. Students felt that one cause was the move to making Grade XII a prerequisite for entrance to Dalhousie. Dentistry was the only Faculty that had increased enrollment.

It was the first year in which a form of compulsory physical education was introduced for freshman. It was on a trial basis, and people still got to choose the sports they were interested in. After pushing for such a decision for several years the GAZETTE now declared its firm opposition. Carleton Stanley must have been tearing his hair out since his original opposition had succumbed to student and faculty pressure for compulsory phys. ed. After failing to win Council appointments Art Meagher became the newspaper's Assistant Business Manager. As a Dalhousie Law professor he has been successful in winning provincial government appointments.

A week later the newspaper printed a letter pointing out that compulsory freshman phys. ed. had been approved by both the Students' and the Senate Gymnasium Committees. There was some grumbling by the paper that it had been trimmed too much by Council, but the heaviest criticism was for whatever Dalhousie did that drove students away - enrollment was up at Acadia and Mount Allison. The 1933-34 Council's audit revealed a \$100 loss which ate further into the accumulated surplus. The bookstore had made a \$452 profit in the same year. Searching for ways to halt the

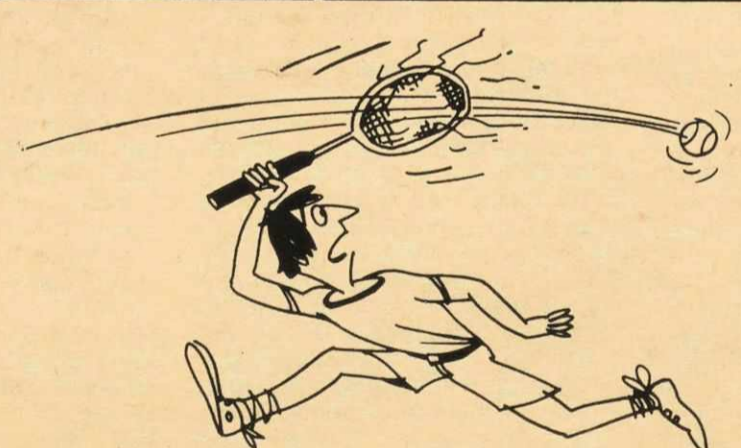
enrollment declines GAZETTE suggested that freshman tuition fees be lowered, to compensate for Halifax's high standard of living and to lure students here on the theory that they would not transfer elsewhere to finish the degree.

It was clear by November 8, 1934 that GAZETTE was taking a more reactionary stance than it had ever done previously. An editorial suggested that co-education was a failure because universities had been designed for men and people dislike having women around. Discussions were light and trivial if women participated. The author proposed separate but equal educational facilities for women because "in spite of woman's so-called emancipation she is still the same creature". It was, coincidentally, the first time the newspaper had no women on its editorial staff since Dalhousie became co-educational about 50 years earlier. In an uncontroversial response to student pressure the student and Senate reps decided to allow smoking on the first floor of the gymnasium during social functions, although it was still banned on the stage.

Continuing to cut budgets, the Council approved a new awards system and a plan to present all awards at a single function. DAAC itself took responsibility for cutting the athletic budgets, and throughout the year it presented financial items to Council as the money was needed. The Council was not certain that a Munro Day programme would be possible. Dalhousie graduate and Prime Minister R.B. Bennett had been given an enthusiastic welcome by students in 1929. Five years later a Sodales

debate audience voted lack of faith in the Bennett policies. Still looking for ways to cut expenses the newspaper's editors suggested that Dalhousie's football team withdraw from the City League, so attention could be concentrated on inter-faculty games and talent development. Even under its new leadership the paper could not avoid controversy. A columnist had supported the lobby for permitting beer to be served in hotels, and several defenders of temperance felt obliged to reply. Reversing an almost traditional policy, the Christmas editorial declared that students were not apathetic - they simply could become involved in only a few activities without marks suffering.

Tempers flared in January 1935 over Council's decision to permit a sorority to stage a Dalhousie Theatre Night. The permanent Secretary-Treasurer had backed the idea as an inexpensive method of seeing if Theatre Nights could still succeed. The newspaper agreed with opponents that the decision amounted to recognition of fraternities, something that had not been done because they represented a clique rather than an inclusive group of students. The editors feared a sudden rush to activities designed to raise money for the Greek letter organizations. The sorority and its friends pressured for a retraction, because proceeds would go to charity. A rival sorority then pointed out that it was for Ontario and United States charities. In the meantime the fraternities began forming an interfraternity council to stave off financial disaster through mutual assistance.




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