

Editorial

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It hurts to say this, but...

The CHRONICLE HERALD seems far fewer people than will use our perturbed about our new Student Union SUB.

The off-the-cuff, poorly-researched first impressions which appeared on the editorial page of November 13's HERALD annoyed and disgusted students, faculty, and administration at Dalhousie. And with good reason.

It is just barely plausible to criticize a university project on grounds of economy, although it might seem that university planners and educators who are concerned with the total concept of education should be better qualified to decide what is extravagant, than those who are not in the university community. But in any case, the charge of extravagance is unfounded.

Details of the financing of the SUB are not a secret. Well over one million dollars of the \$3.7 million total price tag is being paid by the union of those students who will "relax, entertain each other, play, (and) eat" in the SUB. About a quarter of that sum has already been paid, while the remainder at present exists as a loan from the university to the student union - a loan which will be repaid within 13 years.

This sum covers the land, ten per cent of the building cost itself, and those furnishings whose cost so disturbs the slumber of the self-styled sentinels of Nova Scotia's purse. The Grants Committee did not provide one cent towards the "luxury of its appointments".

The extent to which the public purse will be raided will, we assure our new-found conscience, not be as great as is feared. "The public's considerable financial involvement in the erection and maintenance on the Student Union Building" is really only their fixed, \$2.8 million involvement in the erection: maintenance will be financed continuously by the student union.

But there remains the problem of those pretentious carpets which "would be the envy of the most discriminating country clubs." Admittedly they add a warmth and comfort which would be lacking in a tiled or stoned area; they are also, it was proven before carpets were selected, cheaper than either stone or hardwood, and capable of being cleaned in one-twelfth the time it takes to clean an equivalent area of tile. The only cheaper alternative, then, would seem to be bare concrete or pine planks.

The design of the furniture is utilitarian, enduring, and practical. The over-all pattern of much of the furnishing reminds us of a large public building in Ottawa, designed to serve

And who will use the SUB? The CHRONICLE HERALD emphasizes the "hard-working, hard-playing and high-spirited undergraduates and graduates" who will use it in coming years. The picture is misleading; the general public for whom the HERALD shows such concern is not excluded from use of the building; in less than two weeks since its opening it has been the site of a public concert by the Atlantic Symphony Orchestra (held in that "auditorium (which) . . . would more than satisfy the managements of the Neptune Theatre and of most movie houses.") It has also played host to a meeting of citizens opposed to extension of the separate school system. It IS a student union building; it is also an integral part of the community.

In student union buildings, as in editorials, advance planning and a thorough knowledge of the factors involved are essential to successful execution of one's plan. Whatever other faults the SUB may possess, it does not represent an irresponsible plunder of the provincial treasury.

GRACIOUS COLLEGE LIFE

Dalhousie University's new Student Union Building, constructed at a cost of \$3,700,000, and opened officially last week, must be one of the most splendid, superbly equipped buildings of its kind in Canada.

Its standards of interior design, furnishings, and equipment can be judged by the following observations. It has a foyer that would make Halifax's leading hotel managers envious. Its boardroom makes the majority of executive meeting places plebeian and depressing. Its consulting and counselling suites would delight any group of prosperous doctors. Its multi-purpose, divisible auditorium, equipped with stage, wide-screen projection equipment, seating 1,000 people, would more than satisfy the managements of the Neptune Theatre, and of most movie houses. Its brightly and thickly carpeted lounges would be the envy of the most discriminating of country clubs.

This, then, is the atmosphere in which Dalhousie students can relax, entertain each other, play, eat, and, in the so-called SUB'S well-appointed counselling rooms and Manpower offices, discuss and decide careers in the post-academic world.

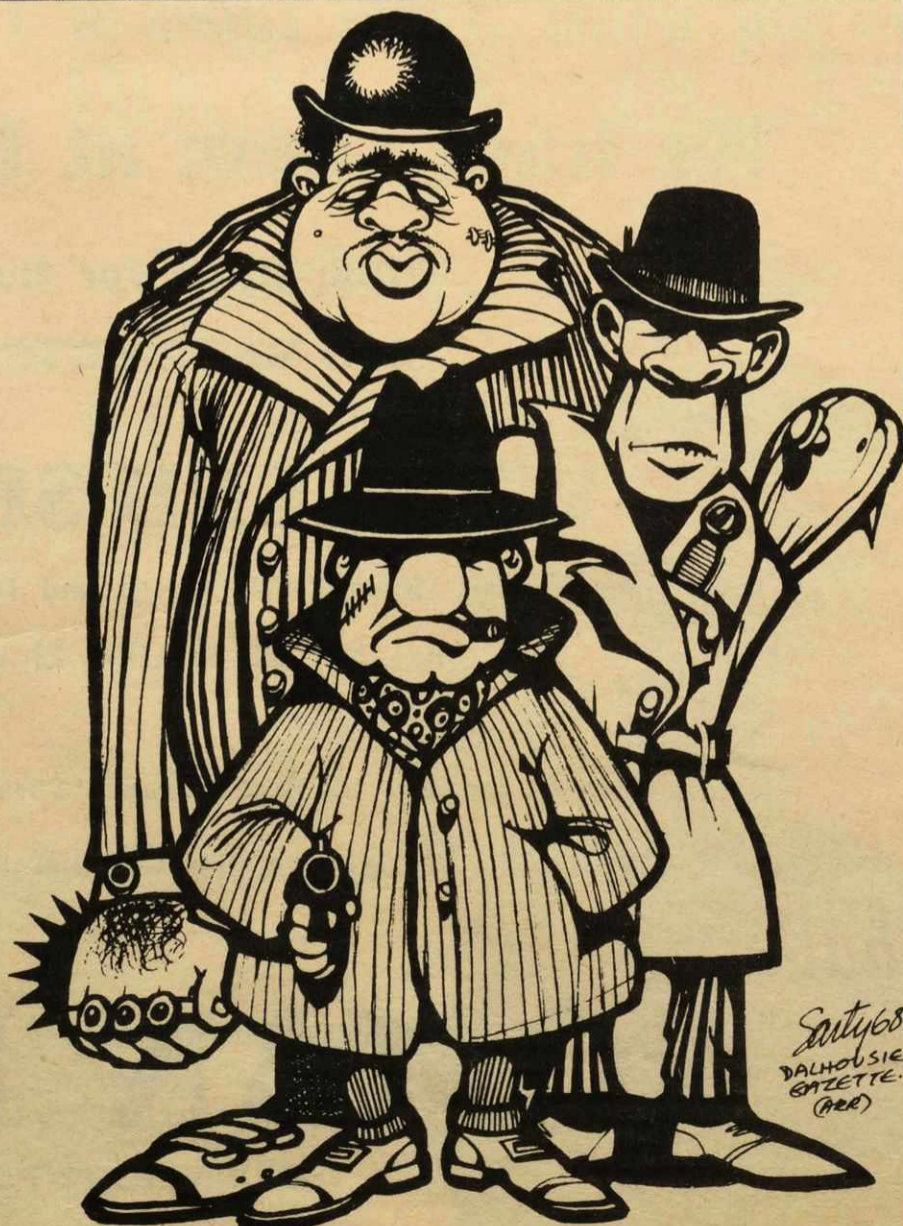
No one of discernment can quarrel with good design, a quality which the building possesses in abundance. Yet reservations about the luxury of its appointments, furniture and equipment are justifiable-particularly when consideration is given to the predominantly utilitarian purpose to which the SUB will be put by generations of hard working, hard playing and high spirited undergraduates and graduates. In view of the public's considerable financial involvement in the erection and maintenance of the Student Union Building, it is appropriate, indeed, to suggest that in future the Nova Scotia University Grants Committee insist upon a more frugal expenditure of the education dollar than is exemplified by the thick pile carpets and the other splendid, but expensive manifestations of design and decoration to be found in the Dalhousie University Student Union Building. There is a danger that other universities in Nova Scotia will want to build and equip SUB, and other buildings, as glorious, and as costly, as Dalhousie's latest addition. The consequence of such a trend will be serious.

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The Council GAZETTE Probe Is Here!