

Missing members undermining council



Dick Matthews ponders empty council chambers

Dal Photo / Dayal

by Tom Regan

The efficiency of council is being seriously undermined because councillors are not showing up for student council meetings, says Dick Matthews, President of Dalhousie Student Council.

For the second time in a row poor attendance by council members at the council meeting forced the tabling of important matters. The meeting was delayed for forty minutes while other missing members were telephoned in order to raise a quorum.

"I have about 12 to 14 councillors I can count on. The rest seem only to show up as they feel like it," said Matthews. There are roughly 33 councillors on the student council, including executive.

"I'm not a baby sitter," said Matthews. "These people should be responsible enough to show up for the meeting on their own."

Matthews said the missing members have not helped the council's already tarnished image with the students.

"We have a bad image with the students as it is. Anything the council has done in the past has been crapped on by the student press. Then the council never bothered to defend itself. I don't want to start kicking people off council, but something has got to be done."

Some have suggested council try having more social oriented events in order to help councillors get to know each other better. This would encourage them to show up for more meetings. However, Matthews is skeptical about this type of idea.

"Just two weeks ago I invited all the members to attend a special showing of the new Dalplex and 12 of them turned up for the tour."

If the problem continues, Matthews said he will go to the "grassroots level", and talk to each individual constituency about their member.

"I want to find out if they are aware of the kind of a job their councillor is or isn't doing for them. If that doesn't work, I will call a general meeting to discuss the problem. Hopefully, we could get enough people to turn it into a productive meeting. A lot of students are apathetic towards the whole situation, but we've got to try and get them involved."

For the moment, though, Matthews is still left with the problem of too much work and not enough student councillors.

"It's a puzzle. People work so hard to get elected, then don't bother to show up. It's a real shame."

Carleton embroiled in controversy over graffiti

OTTAWA (CUP) — The graffiti war at Carleton University continues.

The Carleton Woman's Centre, the object of most of the sexist and racist graffiti that has been plastered over the underground tunnels, washrooms, blackboards, classrooms and parking garage, has asked the Carleton Student Union Association (CUSA) to step in and prevent further defacing.

In a letter to the student newspaper, The Charlantan, the centre members wrote, "We are not only tired of having to read crude statements about ourselves, but are becoming concerned about our personal safety. We consider this a gross violation of our freedom and therefore urge you to take action."

A committee of CUSA, the tunnel authority, put up signs last week warning students they may face prosecution if caught spray-painting, or marking or defacing university property.

Mike Kalnay, co-ordinator of the CUSA tunnel authority, later clarified his remarks by saying it is the intention of the university to provide legal grounds for prosecuting anyone who paints racist, sexist or hate messages.

It was not the intention of the university, he said, to prosecute those painting graffiti that does not fall into these categories.

Last year the woman's

centre protested against the graffiti painted in the tunnel and eventually painted over it. One woman's centre member said she had spray-painted over the writing in the garage but it reappeared the next day.

The centre noted in their letter to CUSA that this campaign had extended far beyond the walls of the tunnel, a traditional place for

graffiti writing. "But perhaps the most frightening was when we found some inside the woman's centre door."

The letters to the editor column of The Charlantan each issue contain several letters over the issue. One student agreed that the graffiti was not pleasant but that the woman's centre had no right to set itself up as a censor board.

He said the best method would be for the woman's centre members to ignore the graffiti.

Another letter writer said the quality of his education had diminished as the graffiti war was forcing his stats professor to write logic problems through woman's symbols and other "sorted rancor sprawled on the blackboard."

"I pay for those lecture halls, blackboards, and tunnel paint jobs and so do thousands of other students," he said. "What makes you think you have the right to infringe on property that isn't exclusively yours?"

"Next time you are tempted to affect my education and vandalize my property why don't you ask me if I care."

Task force to examine student aid

Establishment of a joint Federal-Provincial Task Force to "examine the total question" of student aid, including accessibility to post-secondary education, was announced late Monday.

The surprise announcement was made at the conclusion of an unpublicized meeting between Federal Secretary of State David MacDonald and the Provincial Council of Education Ministers (CME) in Toronto.

It was also decided at the meeting that "at his earliest opportunity" MacDonald would introduce amendments to the Canada Student Loans Act to make students in trimester academic systems eligible for student aid. Currently students who are enrolled in courses which are of less than 26 weeks duration are not eligible for student

assistance.

The statement said the Task Force will look at the debt load of students, portability of student aid (for students transferring from province to province) and accessibility to post-secondary education in examining the Canadian student aid situation. Observers expect the Task Force could be the first step in the establishment of a new Student Aid Plan.

The announcement took the National Union of Students (NUS) by surprise. In September NUS had been told by the CME that it would be able to meet with a sub-committee of the CME before the Education Ministers met in January. One of the main topics of that meeting was expected to be student aid.

NUS researcher Jeff Parr said when NUS learned the

CME was meeting in Toronto on the weekend and had a meeting Monday with MacDonald, it contacted the Secretary of State's office and the CME office. Parr said NUS was led to believe no concrete decisions would be made at the meeting.

NUS is hopeful there will be student representation on the Task Force, said Parr. He said a previous study conducted by the Liberal Government in 1974 did not allow student involvement.

The statement also announced the formation of two other Task Forces, one to study Bilingualism in Education and another on the Use of Satellites in Education.

NOTE: Details are sketchy as this is early scoop. Press release had not been issued at time of writing for Dalhousie Gazette.