

SUN S organizes rally at SMU

by Paul Clark

No chanting, no flame-throwing, no rioting, just 150 or so concerned students gathering to speak their minds.

The atmosphere was peaceful but serious last Friday afternoon at a general assembly for St. Mary's students, organized by the Student Union of Nova Scotia (SUNS) on-campus committee for St. Mary's.

The assembly, held in Room 172 in the Loyala building at St. Mary's, was organized to get student feedback on issues like the rising costs of tuition, student aid and differential fees for foreign students.

Organizers were pleased with the turnout and noted people were discussing issues enthusiastically with them even after the assembly attended.

Before students got up to ask questions or speak out, three speakers involved in student affairs relayed information and put a perspective on some of the controversial matters to be discussed.

Mike McNeil, chairperson of SUNS, spoke the longest on subjects ranging from the decreasing accessibility of education to rises in residence and cafeteria prices to 1.3 and cafeteria prices to a 1.3 million dollar gap between the federal government's education funding to the provincial government and what Buchanan's government actually spent on education.

He said student accessibility is "threatened like in the pre-sixties era where only the wealthy receive an education".

Nova Scotia has the highest tuition in Canada, he said.

Residence food prices rose over 30% at St. Mary's this year while summer wages increased little and student aid only went up \$100, McNeil said.

The National Union of Students is calling for a summer job creation program, he said, due to a 14% unemployment rate in Nova Scotia for students last summer.

He also mentioned SUNS' student aid brief which was presented to the Maritime Higher Education Commission, who make recommendations about education to the provincial government.

It is not yet known whether any of the changes in student aid suggested in the brief, like lowering the age of independence to 18 or having summer savings related to salary and time worked, will be implemented.

"The biggest problem is the provincial government and cabinet", he said.

McNeil said that economically, differential fees actually hurt the country.

"But my main beef is that it hurts poor students, limiting education to those students that can afford one."

Belinda Gallagher, St. Mary's financial aid officer, explained how the Nova Scotia government's withdrawal of \$750 per foreign student in university funding pushed schools like St. Mary's into imposing individual differential fees.

"St. Mary's wasn't rich enough to subsidize foreign students", she said.

Students at the assembly freely offered their opinions on these issues and applauded several times to show their support for speakers in the crowd.

One student said he'd been lying in the hospital for the last two years, unable to get a job, and that the loan he received was insufficient to cover his education costs.

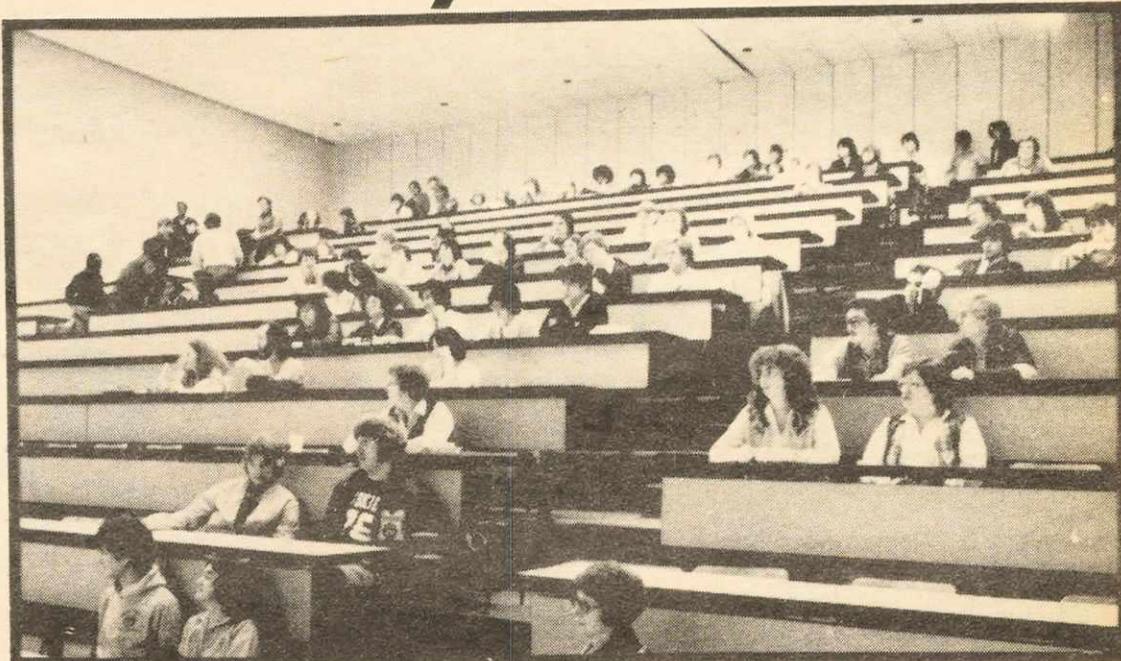
"Now I can't even afford to go out and get a beer", he said.

Regarding differential fees one student from Bermuda said, "I'm bringing money into this country".

"For what I'm paying, I don't think I'm getting my money's worth".

Dick Matthews, Dal's student council president, attended the assembly and said it was more successful than he anticipated.

Asked if he was going to have a similar kind of event at



Students discuss SUNS at St. Mary's

Dal, Matthews said he wasn't planning one right now.

But he said in January there would be a general student union meeting to ratify changes in the constitution, where all Dal students invited and given voting privileges. He said this would be an

opportunity for students to express their concerns.

Jeff Champion, chairman of the SUNS on-campus committee for Dal, said he didn't know about the assembly.

He said he couldn't go to the SUNS conference at Acadia this weekend and had

been trying to get in touch with Mike McNeil for weeks.

As for having an assembly at Dal, Champion said it had been suggested.

"But we decided to do that kind of thing would be a colossal flop. It wouldn't work at Dal."

DAGS-DSU reach agreement

by Tom Regan

A policy statement giving the Dalhousie Association of Graduate Students (DAGS) a certain degree of political autonomy from the Dalhousie Student Union (DSU) will be presented to the Dalhousie Students' council at its regular meeting Sunday night.

The statement, which was ironed out in negotiations between DAGS and DSU stipulates the DAGS "cannot be seen as merely another sub-group of the Dalhousie Student Union." It will grant DAGS the authority to deal with the special interests of Graduate students.

Under the agreement the Student Union also promises to "go to bat" for DAGS in order to obtain separate voting and representation rights for the graduate association in the Student Unions of Nova Scotia (SUNS) and the National Union of Students (NUS).

Siona Bastable, president of DAGS said the agreement is quite significant. "I think it's a very good step in the right direction, I will wait to see how it will do in practise before I give it my final blessing. It isn't everything we wanted, but it's a hell of a lot more than we ever had before."

Bastable said the real test will be concerning voting rights on the student organizations.

"We are prepared to work hard to make this policy work in practise. It will be interesting to see if the DSU will keep its promise to support us in front of NUS." said Bastable.

"But I can't foresee any problems."

Dick Matthews, president of the Student Union said the agreement will give DAGS the representation it has never had before on national bodies.

"DAGS is the major graduate association east of Ontario", said Matthews. "They need special consideration. It's important that they have a vote on SUNS and NUS so that they will feel a part of the graduate student movement nationally."

What of the possibility of DAGS and DSU disagreeing on certain matters within these organizations?

"Sure it's possible for them to have different opinions about the council", said Mathews. "But I don't think

that will hurt our position at all. That's why we want them to have a separate vote so they can look after their own particular interests."

Under the policy statement financial control will remain within the hands of the DSU.

"We are going to keep the arrangements that have been used in the past regarding financial matters", said Matthews. "We don't want to create a case of parallel unionism. They aren't ready for that and neither are we."

Bastable agreed with Matthews.

"We are still happy with the old agreement. You see the point of the new policy is that students should work together first and foremost."

Joining SUNS requires no referenda

WOLFVILLE (CUP)—Campus membership in the Students' Union of Nova Scotia (SUNS) will be decided by student councils, not by referendums of the student population, conference delegates decided November 24 and 25.

Delegates debated whether the traditional mass based structure of students at a campus deciding to participate in an organization by referendum was any better or worse than student councils making the decision.

"I don't think any referenda will make us more representative of the students than we are right now," said Mike McNeil, SUNS chairperson.

"The organization is campus based with the campus committee being the focal

point. The plenary is the co-ordinating body," he said.

McNeil said fees would be levied at the beginning of the year and would be guaranteed; preventing a campus from withholding its fees and endangering the whole organization because it did not like a specific campaign.

McNeil said delegates were concerned the percentage of students voting in referendums were sometimes not indicative of the whole student population.

The decision has been handed over to the constitution committee who will incorporate it into the constitution and return it to be ratified at the next SUNS conference, slated for mid January.

Foreign students drop at MSU

HALIFAX (CUP)—The imposition of differential tuition fees in Nova Scotia has caused a sharp decline in the number of international students coming to study in the province, enrolment figures from Mount Saint Vincent University indicate.

University figures show international student enrolment has dropped by 35 per cent in the first year of differential tuition fees. The Maritime Provinces now charge international students an additional \$750 to attend post-secondary education institutes there.

"I would assume that the differential fee has some

effect on the entry of foreign students in our educational system, which is highly evident in the drop in enrolment of first year foreign students," says student union president Paul McNair. "I would further assume that these people would be in a higher income bracket than those who had come before, or that they are receiving financial assistance from the government of their country."

International students at Mount St. Vincent make up 3.4 per cent of the university enrolment. While visa student enrolment dropped 35 per cent, overall enrolment at the university increased by about seven per cent.