

Students find security is lacking on campus

by Cathy McDonald

Last Friday's "hammer-attack" has raised fears about how safe it is - especially for women - to be on campus at night.

The student union's Women's Committee criticized Dalhousie's reduction of professional security personnel over the last two years as sacrificing personal safety for savings in its debt-ridden budget. The number of security people was reduced from 18 full-time to 10 earlier this year, and back up to the current 12.

"We don't think the administration has realized the state of insecurity on campus and the fear people have," said Caroline Zayid, a member of the committee.

She said the most recent attack is only a more violent example of women being followed, flashed at,

and attacked this year.

At a public meeting Wed. March 30, called by the Women's Committee to discuss campus security, Zayid asked the 20 people if they knew of incidences of harrasment. Almost all put up their hand.

Until this week, a force of two security guards were on duty at night, one a dispatcher in the security office, and the other patrolling the campus in a truck.

As of Monday, the number of personnel was increased to four, one "roving" the Killam Library, and another in the Life Sciences Centre. The LSC-guard was planned before-hand, but Friday night's attack moved the administration to implement it right away.

John Graham, Director of University Services, warned against thinking that more people patrol-

ling the campus would make it secure.

"This isn't an attempt to improve security," Graham said, referring to

the new man in the library, "but to allay some fears. With the type of fellow (the hammer-attacker) we're talking about, it wouldn't have

SUNS forum reaches out to public

by C. Ricketts

Reactions are generally favourable to the success of the symposium on Higher Education held March 23 which was sponsored by the Student Unions of Nova Scotia (SUNS).

About 150 people attended the four panel discussions throughout the day, hearing discussions on

financial restraint, student employment and unemployment, student aid and the future of higher education.

SUNS Executive Officer Peter Kavanagh thought the symposium was a "good step forward" to educating Nova Scotians about post-secondary education. "It's probably the first time students, faculty and administration sat in the same room to talk about higher education," he said.

Among the audience were two members of the province's Commission of Inquiry into Post-Secondary Education. The commission chair, Ron MacLennan, said "I appreciated the invitation and opportunity to come to the symposium." He added that coming to the scene as a layman there were a number of issues discussed which shed some new light on the situation of higher education in Nova Scotia.

Student Union president Peter Rans said he was "pleased with the quality of panelists" and thought public media had good coverage of the event. "I think the symposium carefully managed to avoid province- or fed-bashing, which would have been unproductive," he said.

Although representation from other university administrations was good, Rans said he was disappointed more students didn't show up for the discussions. About 40 students in total caught some portion of the four panel discussions.



Photo/Dal Photo

Dalhousie hosted SUNS' public forum on higher education on March 23 as its participation in the National Week of Mobilization.

Commerce society gears up for referendum

by C. Ricketts

With only two weeks to go before exams, the Commerce Society is gearing up for a referendum.

On April 6, society members will vote "aye" or "nay" to increase fees by 20 dollars, 17 of which will be funnelled into a trust fund to purchase a society house within the next few years.

The Commerce Society presently uses a house at 1228 Seymour Street for Society functions. It is still uncertain if it will be able to use the same building, if any, next year.

Student Council called for the referendum in the March 27 council meeting when a motion passed on March 13 approving the fee increase was rescinded. There had been vocal opposition from some commerce students in attendance when the original motion was put forward.

The reaction spurred a flurry of petitions circulating among commerce students. Approximately 430 people signed petitions supporting the fee increase to fund a commerce house while approximately 130 disapproved of the increase and called for a referendum. There is a full-time registration of 760 in the Faculty of Business Administration.

Says Chris Andrus of the Commerce Housing Committee, "Council wasn't looking at the numbers of people on the petitions, but listened to the vocal opposition at the council meeting."

"It's unfortunate we have to go to a referendum after the difficulties of putting together a petition at this point in the year," says Leanne Todd, on the "Yes" committee. "Even when we clearly won the petition." But she adds they are willing to go to a referendum to clear up the question.

Both the "bad guys" and "the

others", as they have come to be known, recognize the need for a society house. Paul Morris, a first year commerce student objecting to the fee increase, claims the housing committee did not investigate alternative sources of funding, and does not think a referendum at this time will have "optimum effect" because of the time factor.

The committee does not want to postpone the referendum to the fall because it would put efforts to establish a trust fund behind another year.

"It seems logical to me that a commerce society earn the money, since it is composed of business students," says Morris.

Morris thinks a smaller increase in fees, perhaps a levy of five dollars towards a housing fund, would "prime the pump" instead of "taxing the students" for a service they might not benefit from. With about 300 active students in the society,

he contends there are nearly 500 who are not active, who must also be considered in Society decisions.

Todd says alternate forms of funding have been investigated, but fund raising "sometimes doesn't work" so it cannot be counted upon as the sole source of revenue.

She continues, "We need a fixed income for fixed costs. Without some money put aside, the commerce society would not be in a negotiating position with the administration."

Andrus says five years ago the society lost its house, and the society died. He continues the society recognizes the society house is "on a prime piece of university land" and stands to lose its present location.

Due to a recommendation made by a space study completed last fall, it is still not known if the society

made any difference."

The guard in the Killam is a three-week position, until exams are over. There is no proposal to make it permanent, Graham said, and there are no proposals to make any more increases in the current security staff.

Graham said Dalhousie's security problem was no different than the rest of society's. And he questioned some of the Women's Committee's proposed solutions.

"It's a question of solutions. When it comes to spending money, how much is enough? Is twice as many people enough?"

Graham said the reduction in professional personnel in the last few years was an attempt to find the correct balance of trained security people versus commissionaires and guards. The security budget was not cut, he said.

Students and commissionaires were increased. But Robbie Shaw, Vice President of Finance and Administration, said at Wednesday's meeting on security, that "commissionaires are useless in terms of security." He said the number of professional security people was reduced "to save money".

Zayid claimed the extra man in the LSC was a response to the vandalism there, rather than a concern for people in the building at night.

"We're not satisfied," Zayid said. "The administration is sounding sympathetic but they haven't done anything. They hired extra people during the fireman's strike for insurance reasons. But they haven't moved to spend more money to make it safer in terms of people."

Shaw was annoyed by complaints that the university is only concerned with buildings, not people. "I wish you'd be more open minded about that," he said to a questioner at the meeting.

Graham also responded to similar criticism. "That's completely wrong. How do you have (security) people going around and not look out for people? They do both."

There were numerous suggestions at Wednesday's meeting for strengthening campus security. As well as increasing the size of the security force, a more visible deterrent to attackers could include a student police force, some said. An escort service was considered by the Women's Committee last fall, Zayid said, but people were not very interested in formalizing a procedure for contacting a student in residence to accompany them across campus.

One woman said self-defense courses were extremely helpful in handling two attacks she experienced.

The Women's Committee requested the city improve its lighting of sidewalks on University Avenue. Dalhousie has improved its lighting after requests from the committee. Zayid said the committee is also educating female students about dangers on campus and suggesting safer travel routes