

MPHEC shifts gears

THE MARITIME PROVINCES Higher Education Commission is playing politics and Nova Scotia's post-secondary education system is at stake.

In past years students could trust the MPHEC to recommend somewhere near reasonable level of funding for our universities. The problem used to be with a provincial government that ignored the commission's recommendations and often cut the per cent increase in half. Observers said the MPHEC was losing credibility in the eyes of the government. One student leader was quoted as saying that if he were the chair of the MPHEC he would resign in protest of the government actions.

Now it seems the commission is losing credibility again—but this time in the eyes of the

university community, in making a lower funding recommendation geared to what government wants to hear rather than what universities need, the MPHEC is simply ensuring its own survival. When the Nova Scotia government announces in a month or so that it's going to increase grants to the post-secondary institutions by 4.5 per cent, the MPHEC can say, "See, they're listening to us."

The question is at what cost? If the government only increases grants in line with the MPHEC's recommendations students will be facing either increased tuition fees (maybe not here but elsewhere) or a decline in the quality of education. And more than likely it'll mean both. The MPHEC is playing politics with your future.



Kim loves a mystery

I HAVE BEEN AT DALHousie for three long years, and in the spring I will be receiving my first degree. Supposedly, this



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document is proof of how much I have learned in my time here, and how many of life's questions I am now equipped to answer. Yet, despite the fact that my brain cells are positively saturated with fascinating tidbits of information, some puzzling questions remain about Dalhousie itself, questions of which none of my courses offer solutions.

For example, I want to know how to pass through the doors of the Dalplex without seeing my entire life flashing before my eyes. I want to know how to find classes in the Life Sciences Centre (besides by their relation to the snack bar). I want to know the magic words which will beckon the Killam elevator to the fourth floor.

There are also quite a few people I'd like to meet before I graduate. They're hard to find, since no one knows them personally, but I have heard them talked about and am therefore convinced that they are out there SOMEWHERE. I want to shake the hand of the student who has attended all of his or her 8:30 am classes for an entire semester. I'm anxious to give a round of applause to the character of epic proportions who has done this remarkable deed and all the reserve readings as well. I feel an urge to chat with the dear soul whose mind is so pure that they

look at the statue in the middle of University Avenue and see an Eskimo playing in the snow. I need to share a moment in time with the person in charge of heat control in the buildings (rumour has it this position is held by a former SS man).

Perhaps most of all, I want to meet the art lover who chose the pieces that decorate our campus. You know the pieces I mean — the ugly white pig in the case in front of the Archives, the piece of rust posed so delicately by the entrance to the SUB, and the aforementioned Eskimo, which to even the most minutely tarnished mind bears a striking resemblance to a pair of testes.

It may be that I am the only student on campus who wonders about these things, but I doubt it. It is more likely that the vast majority of people share my confusions, and are, like myself, eager to seek out answers to my questions in hopes that I can enlighten myself and others, and be remembered as the woman who brought peace of mind to Dalhousie. In the meantime I shall continue to write down my observations about university life so that if I fail in my first endeavor I can at least be remembered as one who laughed at her own discomforts and, in so doing, brought a bit of humour onto the campus.

Joe Skywalker and the Star Wars plan

By PAUL DAVIS

FOR THE PAST WEEK OR SO, Canadians have been treated to a ringside seat for the U.S. debate over the propriety of the U.S. Strategic Defence Initiative, (SDI), commonly known as 'Star Wars'.

What are the implications of Star Wars for Canada?

While the technical discussion of the feasibility of an exo-atmospheric ballistic missile defence drones on, some key strategic questions have got lost in the technological clutter.

First, the SDI is not going to replace nuclear arms overnight. Secondly, in the unlikely event that such a system becomes operational, it could prompt the superpower which attains a workable system first, to strike the other lagging superpower from beneath the SDI shield. In short, Ronald Reagan would like to take the word 'mutual' out of

deterrence, and mutually assured destruction.

For our European allies who depend on U.S. nuclear weapons for deterrence, this is a technical nightmare: by protecting the U.S. with SDI, Reagan will effectively 'decouple' Europe from the

American nuclear deterrent—something the Soviets have been trying to do for almost half a century. To make nuclear weapons 'obsolete' is just fine in Reagan's mind; it is not so easy for NATO, which will be without the shelter of SDI. Make no mistake about it, Star Wars is a scheme to defend American soil—not European soil.

For Canada, is it worth the short-term destabilization involved in researching such a system? Joe Clark feels that it is. His statements to the House make it clear that Canada might otherwise miss out on the powerful economic advantages of space defence research contracts, and

sabotage the upcoming strategic arms reductions talks in Geneva.

Clark's position is doubly problematic. Participating in Star Wars without at least examining its possibly catastrophic destabilizing influence on nuclear weapons seems foolhardy. Silence on a subject that, with the exception of the UK, our European allies are dead-set against, seems hardly to be doing them a favour.

Hopefully Clark secretly wishes to critique and to constrain the SDI from within, by way of participation, as opposed to the previous government's habit of criticizing from without. For alliance solidarity during the sensitive negotiations in Geneva, remaining silent on the SDI on the grounds that it is a subject of bilateral negotiation, seems to form a dangerous precedent. Must Canadian foreign policy be silent on everything that is a subject of negotiation? If so, why not send Canadian diplomats home?