

Contract talks are moving along

BY SALLY THOMAS

One of Dalhousie's unions says its contract talks won't sour like the faculty negotiations and strike of last year.

The International Union of Occupational Engineers (IUOE) represents Dalhousie's carpenters, plumbers, electricians, custodians, and technicians.

Martin Beaver, Dalhousie's union representative, says talks are

difficult but moving ahead. He also says that the union is not close to a strike.

"[Negotiations] are taking excessive time. We do have difficulties, but I think we're working through it," he said.

Christine Smith, a university spokesperson, says the talks are moving forward.

"We've made steady progress," she said.

Steve Slaunwhite, an IUOE

member, is a heavy duty custodian. He says the union hasn't been given anything to vote on yet.

"We get no information from the meetings, we're kept in the dark," he said.

Slaunwhite also said nothing is final until the members vote on the proposed contract.

Last November, the contracts with the faculty and IUOE both ran out. But the faculty negotiated with the university first.

Martin Beaver says these contracts are different from faculty talks because they encompass the whole campus.

The union is also responsible for security on campus. If a strike occurred, which both sides say will not happen, security on campus would be disrupted.

When Dalhousie and the Technical University of Nova Scotia (TUNS) amalgamated over a year ago, four different labour organizations merged with the IUOE. Beaver says a lot of the problems with renegotiations are coming from trying to squeeze four unions into one.

He also says he doesn't know how long the new contract will last. "It could last a year, it could

last four years, I have no idea. But we want our contract to be the same as the [Dalhousie Faculty Association's]," he said.

The university says it expects the talks to last until October, but Beaver says he's not sure.

The contract's main issues are salaries, benefits, and seniority.

Steve Slaunwhite says his major issues with the contract are better working conditions, job security, supervisors, and raises.

Both the union and the university say there is no threat of a strike — that talks are hard, but moving along.

Slaunwhite says he's anxious for the contract to be finalized.

"I just want everything to get over with, to see where we stand."

Scholarships at Dal: "unfortunate reality"

Change in GPA requirements will affect students with renewable scholarships

BY KATIE TINKER

Students who've been given renewable scholarships this year will have to work a little harder to hang on to them.

In previous years, the Grade Points Average (GPA) requirement for renewing scholarships was 3.7, an A-minus average, but this year that average has been raised to 3.85.

Elizabeth Yeo, associate registrar in charge of awards, says the decision to raise the requirement came as a result of an imbalance between two different types of scholarships — in-course and renewable.

In-course scholarships are awarded to upper-year students, based on the marks they get at Dal, whereas renewable scholarships are normally given to students entering from high school.

"Raising the GPA cut-off for renewable scholarships was the only way to make the awards more equitable," Yeo said. "We were finding that the cut-off GPA for getting in-course scholarships was way up, and at the same time students with renewable scholarships were getting more money with lower GPAs."

Whether the change will

affect the imbalance depends on how well students with renewable scholarships do. If less students are able to achieve the higher GPA needed to renew their scholarships, there will be more money for in-course scholarships.

The change will not affect students who have renewable scholarships from previous years.

Students have mixed feelings about the change.

Kelly Mackenzie, Dalhousie Student Union vice-president student advocacy, says the change is both good and bad.

"There's more money for the upper-year students that are in university working their butts off, that don't have the security of a renewable scholarship," she said. "They deserve some help."

But Mackenzie says her biggest problem with the decision is that it helps one group of students by taking money away from another.

"A person that earns a 3.7 GPA should get a scholarship regardless," she said. "You're on the Dean's List...you should be eligible for a scholarship."

Heather Stone, a third-year English major, supports the university's decision. As a transfer

student, in-course scholarships are her only hope of getting money from Dal.

She says it's not fair students trying to get in-course scholarships should have to work so much harder than students who got renewable scholarships based on their high school grades.

"Transfer students are just as valuable as people who've been here from the get-go," she said. "There's definitely some inequality."

Hildi Konok, assistant dean of the faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, says she wishes the change wasn't necessary.

"It's always a question of weighing what's fair and reasonable with what's available," she said.

"There's only X-number of dollars, and more students are qualifying for that money. It's an unfortunate reality."

Konok says she thinks finding the money to go to school is already a big enough struggle.

"Things are much harder now than when I went to school," she says. "In those days we never had to hold down part-time jobs while we were in classes. These days it's the norm. I really think students are having to take on too much."

News from home

BY TYSON JAMES

A new magazine shop on campus is aiming to bring news from all over the world to Dalhousie, and sell the stuff all Dalhousie students want to read — regardless of their interests or backgrounds.

The store, called News from home, is on the ground floor of the Student Union Building (SUB), and run by the Dalhousie Student Union.

Joanne Knox, the store's manager, says the store will serve Dalhousie's diverse population.

"We thought it was a good idea to carry international newspapers and a wide variety of magazines because there is such a wide variety of students on campus," she said.

And one first-year student agrees — if they actually accommodate all students.

"I just hope I'll be able to buy magazines that are about black people," she said.

Knox says the store, near a lounge area and a coffee shop, is an attempt to improve the SUB's atmosphere. A place, she says, students could grab a coffee and donut and sit and read the

newspaper.

"We're trying to make people feel more at home," she said. "We would like to see people requesting newspapers from their hometown."

Brian Kellow, executive vice-president of the student union agrees that the new store is a good addition to the building.

The store is in a spot left empty when Pizza Hut moved into the building's cafeteria.

Kellow says he had received complaints that the SUB is just a place where companies could advertise, so the school could get money. He says this store is a good way to address these concerns.

"The [SUB] is a center of a community and in the last years it has looked more like a discount mall than the centre of one of Canada's oldest universities," he said.

"No one is offering an alternative, and this new store is an alternative. We're going to be operating it and no one else."

This alternative includes student input into store stock. There is a catalogue and people will be able to order newspapers and magazines.

International papers will be written in a country's native language.

Kellow says that since the store is mainly for students, they should get what they want — with some exceptions.

"Students have total control, if they want a magazine in, then it's in. The obvious exception is porn," he said.

"If a student raises an objection about a magazine then we'll investigate. We don't want to have anything that goes against [DSU] policies, such as sexism, racism and homophobia."

Both Kellow and Knox say they expect the store to do well, but that they aren't looking to make a profit.

"Everything we do, we shoot for a break-even," Kellow said. "If we make a profit, that will be translated into more jobs for students."

The store will employ at least eight students.

Magazines and newspapers are pre-priced by the supplier so Knox, the store's manager, says students can't get student discounts.

But she says the name reflects how she'd like people to think about the store, and the SUB.

"Everybody has a home and we want the students to feel comfortable here and that they are still in touch with home."

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