

New education minister

By PAT FAGAN

PREDICTIONS MADE BY various local student union executives about the upcoming provincial cabinet shuffle came true last week.

Thanks to the shuffle in the Buchanan government, education minister Terry Donahoe left this portfolio to become minister of the new department of manpower and occupational training.

Donahoe had expressed a desire to leave the portfolio, which he has occupied since 1978. The portfolio has made him the target of critics of the current education system in Nova Scotia. The vacancy in the education department will be filled by Tom McInnes, former minister of municipal affairs. It is unknown at this point what effect the shuffle will have on the Royal Commission report on post secondary education. The report has yet to be released after having been delayed twice already.

While the delays continue, one Halifax resident would like to see immediate changes brought about on what he calls "major problems" in Nova Scotia's secondary education system.

Fred Buckley is a retired mechanical and civil engineer whose 45-year background in the field brought certain problems to his attention.

Buckley says he observed misguided education, particularly in engineering, a decade ago, and still sees it today. After retiring eight years ago, he began actively criticizing the university system, believing that the problems were not confined to engineering. He submitted a brief of the Royal Commission outlining his concerns and went to the hearings to expand on his statements.

Despite having his say there, Buckley is unsure if and how the Commission will be able to solve the present dilemma. He thinks the panel, which consisted of a Halifax businessman, a former deputy minister of mines and energy and a local actress will do little good. "I don't think the fellows who were put on the Royal Commission knew enough about education," he says.

Buckley sees several problems plaguing today's universities. He says there is an abundance of courses which are unnecessary and impractical for certain fields, such as in social work and nursing. Many other courses are repetitive and university degrees often too diversified, he says.

Buckley cites Business Engineering as an example of an unnecessary degree. As well, trade schools offer courses that are "altogether too long and complicated for our students to understand. We must design courses to teach workers only what they need to do a good job," says Buckley.

Professors are also to blame for many of the difficulties, says Buckley. Too many of them are more interested in self-gain, taking too many sabbaticals, for

instance, rather than in being interested in their students, he says. He also says many professors lack practical work experience in teaching.

Buckley says textbooks are another problem area.

"These books are just loaded with padding. They write two or three pages on something I could write about in three sentences," he says. Course books such as those used in Physics and Mechanics are unnecessarily complicated, says Buckley.

Because tuition costs are so high, both for student and taxpayer, Buckley would like a university education to be shorter, containing more concentrated, practical learning.

"I think we should be heading more for a course in getting general education," says Buckley. "We're keeping people in school too long. We're tending to make the courses longer and longer. I call the work that young people are doing in universities torture. They give them so much junk to learn."

"There is the problem of arranging an education system which will provide a more practical way to provide our youth with the knowledge and skill to make a living wage." Through a new approach to education, Buckley argues, it is possible that a new awareness could be fostered in students that could help alleviate many of society's ills, particularly in the economy. He is eager to get a chance to speak directly with students because he believes they need to know what is wrong with the system and he feels they will be the instruments in changing it.

"I think a person would get the most results if the students were to learn what's wrong with the thing. If the whole student body felt that the universities were in a mess, I think they'd have the best chance of anybody to say, 'Look, we're going to have to do something about this, we're on the wrong track,'" he says.

Letters

What can we say?

To the editor,

"Peace and disarmament is within our grasp," trumpets the *Gazette* (Nov. 14). Are they really? Millions wish they were, but muddled grammar and muddled history are unconvincing.

Your anonymous columnist's grasp far exceeds his reach:

— Did the World War I allies try to keep the peace in the 1930's through deterrence, as he asserts? Quite the contrary. Both standard and revisionist histories agree that appeasement — of which the Munich Pact was the most notorious example — was the policy.

— Was it obvious, as he asserts, when Hitler invaded Poland in 1939, that he could not win? Negative again. Germany was far better prepared than France and



England; Stalin had just purged his best generals. Hitler almost did win the War in 1941 and 1942 — even though the Nazi economy at that time was not totally committed to the war effort.

— Were the Germans badly treated and starving in the streets in the 1920's as the author asserts? Germany did lose World War I and did have a severe inflation, but unemployment in Britain was far worse in the 1920's.

— Would the world have been a better place — as is implied by the *Gazette's* article — if the pacifists like Canada's Woodsworth had been running Britain, France and the Soviet Union and had disarmed them during the late 1930's as Germany was arming itself for aggression? This is the gut issue. Historical might-have-beens will always be speculative, but surely in this case far more Jews would have been sent to gas chambers, England would have been invaded — and probably defeated and occupied, and the Soviet Union would have collapsed. A lasting "Pax Germanica" under Hitler and his ilk boggles the mind.

Santayana wrote, "those who cannot remember history are condemned to repeat it."

Yours faithfully,
Paul B. Huber

TYP is for survivors

To the editors,

It has been brought to my attention that many students attending Dalhousie University see the Transition Year Program as a program for students who are

of less intelligence than the average student attending university. The program is, for many of the blacks and natives involved, an opportunity to attend university as an academic student for free. These ambitious students wish only to be further educated and TYP is simply a discipline and a forewarning of the "difficult" curriculum ahead. Students chosen to be official TYP students are chosen from a long list consisting of people from all parts of Nova Scotia. The selection involves everything from punctuality and attendance, to academic skills and willingness to work. TYP is not a program for the uneducated black and native students in Canada; it is a program for survivors who wish now to conquer.

Garth Johnston
Halifax, Nova Scotia

Bus passes...

To the editors,

In your November seventh issue I read the article entitled "Bus Passes Pick up Speed" and was very impressed with the progress and concern of the Student Union regarding this issue. Even though I am an out-of-province student and have lived in Halifax for only three months, I am quite aware of the need for the bus passes.

As an off campus student I have to travel on the bus at least twice each day and with the present fares, and a coming ten cent increase as of December the second, this becomes very expensive. On an average I spend ten dollars on bus fares each week,

and, as I am sure many realize, this amount is a lot for students, such as myself, living on a meager budget. If the bus passes for post-secondary students could be brought into effect, even if they are for only off-peak hours, I am sure that many other students like myself, would be relieved since twenty dollars each month for a bus pass is more appealing than forty dollars each month for fares.

In the article it was stated that the Metropolitan Transit Commission is already operating at a loss of three thousand dollars this year and the introduction of bus passes would mean an additional loss. If this is the case why doesn't this Commission consider keeping the buses running later to try to subsidize its loss? Considering the lifestyle of students, their night life does not begin until somewhere around midnight and by this time the buses have usually stopped running and students often invest their money in a taxi. The very same situation exists when the mob of people influx to the downtown area. When the night clubs close and it's time to leave there are no buses around so these people provide tremendous business to the taxi companies. If the Metropolitan Transit Commission is so concerned with its money loss such money making opportunities should be seized.

Overall, the Metropolitan Transit Commission needs improvement in various areas and I am proud to see that the Student Union is striving for one major improvement; the existence of bus passes for the students.

Glenda Cokes