

SECURITY REMAINS AN ISSUE

by Elizabeth Donovan

Despite an increase in Dalhousie's Security staff, "Students have been talking about walking on the campus at night and many," said Judy Hayashi, Director of Student Counselling at Dalhousie, "are worried."

It appears, however, that the Dalhousie Security Department is anything but worried. Max Keeping, Director of Dalhousie Security, expressed confidence in the recent increase in personnel as well as an additional van to patrol the campus.

"At present we've increased our personnel by three, enabling us to have a security guard in the Life Sciences Center from 3pm to 11pm and another on the night and early morning shift from 11pm to 7am. Therefore we are providing around-the-clock surveillance in that building," he said.

The Security Department's responsibilities are also channelled into other areas such as the protection of property. Due to the fact that Dalhousie's 125 buildings are spread over the city, many disturbing questions had arisen concerning the lack of security patrolling the walkways and streets at night. It wasn't uncommon last year for areas on campus to be left unguarded for hours at a time.

In response to this dilemma the security department have also hired two students who will be "walkers" at night. Keeping said that these students will be roaming around the campus, rather than remaining in one particular place. "The trend will be more people moving into more areas," explained Keeping.

The recent action taken by Security is considered by many to be long overdue. Last year, because of a series of assaults and attempted assaults against women on campus, many women were plagued with feelings of uneasiness and frustration about walking alone at night. Areas in the Life Sciences Center, residences and walkways were left unprotected because the security department did not replace the nine guards who had quit over a number of years. After the alarming rise in the rate of assaults, the administration could no longer ignore this.

Keeping commented on the validity of such previous incidents of assault, saying, "We had no record of some of the cases of abuse that were mentioned in the Gazette last year." Yet Keeping acknowledged that many incidents of abuse that occur are never reported. He emphasized the importance of reporting such abuse by calling the Security Dept. at 424-6400.

Evidence supports the fact that many occurrences of assault are never reported to the authorities. Dr. Johnson, Director of Student Health Services, stated that over 75 per cent of abuse victims will not report it.

Hayashi said, "Even with an increase in Security, the damaging side effects of these previous assaults on campus may promote the withdrawal of many female students from taking full advantage of the academic and social activities at night."

According to Patricia DeMéo, member of the Dalhousie Women's Faculty Organisation, the impact of the last year's harassment in the Life Sciences Centre is not only restricted to students. She says, "At present, many female students have decided not to take night courses in that building. Women faculty have even expressed their apprehension by saying they don't feel good about going in there."

This is an area which the administration may soon have to address, since the discrimination of women has directly resulted. DeMéo said that a great many women who are enrolled in part-time courses usually have to attend these courses at night. Many, she fears, are going to decline taking courses on account of the potential risk involved.

The administration has tried to decrease the potential hazards for walking students by recently installing lights behind the Killam Library. Max Keeping noted, "The attitude the administration has taken concerning the improvement in lighting is that it will be a process and is by no means completed yet."

There are those who would certainly agree that poor lighting still remains a problem which needs to be rectified. Students who have to wait at bus stops are alarmed by the lack of lighting.

Susan McIntyre, vice-president of Student Council, expressed her concern over specific areas such as the boulevard along University Avenue. "Although the lights are intended to illuminate the streets and walkways, in reality it is only lit for vehicles."

McIntyre, last year's acting chair for the Women's Committee, stressed the importance of finding workable solutions to these problems.

This was the objective in mind when a group of concerned women started an escort service last year. McIntyre said it would have been more appropriately called a buddy service, since it operated on the basis that many women share similar concerns and apprehensions when walking alone at night, and the name implies more of a mutual agreement between both parties.

Although the escort service got off to a good start, it later broke up due to lack of use on the part of the larger residences. McIntyre said, however, that an enduring aspect did result from such a service. "Women were not only becoming more aware of their situation, but were getting together to act upon a situation that affects all women directly and indirectly."



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New CFS chair mellow

By Glen Sanford
Canadian University Press
National Bureau

OTTAWA -- For someone who has spent the past four months perched on top of Canada's tottering student movement, Graham Dowell seems remarkably relaxed.

Dowell has taken the concerned-and-critical-but-mellow-and-optimistic approach to chairing the Canadian Federation of Students and his style allows him to remain calm while the federation sputters on the brink of political and financial insolvency.

The 26-year old University of Regina graduate easily won the federation's top executive position at the CFS general meeting in Saskatoon last May, when he ran against a little-known candidate from Ontario.

Dowell took on the job at an especially bad time for CFS. Students across the country had just dealt the federation a series of membership rejections, including a 61 per cent referendum loss at the University of Toronto, and a successful pull-out referendum at St. Mary's University in Halifax, which was the first campus to join CFS.

At the general meeting where Dowell was elected, delegates were grappling with regional splits, conflict between the political and services branches, a \$47,000 deficit, and general disagreement over the federation's purpose and direction.

The Students' union of Nova Scotia was launching a barrage of criticisms at CFS for ignoring the needs of Maritime students. On the other side of the country the

Federation of Alberta Students had just self-destructed, leaving students there in disarray.

Dowell knew he was taking on a difficult task. He inherited the job from Brenda Cote, who after a one-year term was so disillusioned with the federation she publicly admitted she wished she had never taken the job.

Cote, the federation's first chair, was elected on an activist ticket after she led a dramatic one-week occupation at the Université de Moncton administration building to protest a massive tuition increase.

But Cote's militant views were not shared by other executive members, and she says she spent the year feeling stifled and frustrated.

Dowell insists this year will be different. "I'm really optimistic," he says. "The bottom line on all this is that CFS has bottomed out. We're on our way up."

Dowell says this following a quiet summer, before the onslaught of students returning for the fall semester have recovered from registration. But his optimism may not be totally unfounded.

At the May conference, delegates made serious efforts to repair their organization. They made moves to combine the boards directing the federation's political and service activities, and cut down the number of executives on the Central Committee.

They committed themselves to eliminating 80 per cent of their deficit by the end of the year, and so far they have met their financial plan.

Delegates also decided the

federation should focus its resources on political issues rather than running membership

referenda on prospective member campuses.

"People know the precarious state we're in, and they aren't prepared to over-extend our resources this year," says Dowell. "We're saying, let's do a good job of servicing the members already in the organization, and then hopefully non-members will look at us and want to join."

But Dowell is not blind to the problems in his organization. He recognizes this fall will be tough for CFS, with important referenda coming up at several Ontario institutions, the university of Alberta, and his campus, the University of Regina.

Though Dowell is hopeful, there is a real chance the federation will suffer another disastrous series of rejections.

"Whenever you try to keep a national organization of any kind together, there's a distinct chance it'll fall apart," he says. "But right now, students just can't afford that. Too many important things are happening to education."

"If people refuse to work within CFS and solve its problems, then there won't be an effective student voice for a long time. If CFS doesn't make it..." Dowell shakes his head.

Soon Dowell will be on the road, travelling first to the Maritimes, and later sweeping across the country. If the next few months don't transform this dedicated optimist into a burned-out cynic, then maybe he'll survive the year. And maybe so will CFS.